

International Women's Day of Prayer

March 5, 2022

Sermon Resource Packet

Praying in the Last Days

Written by Cindy Tutsch, DMin

Includes seminar

Why Prayer Matters

Written by Cindy Tutsch, DMin



Prepared by Department of Women's Ministries
General Conference of Seventh-day Adventists
12501 Old Columbia Pike, Silver Spring MD 20904-6600 USA
womensministries@gc.adventist.org
adventist.women.org

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WOMEN'S MINISTRIES

December 14, 2021

Dear Sisters,

Joyful greetings. We live in uncertain times, times of loneliness and fear. Where do we turn? How do we find peace and comfort in these uncertain times? Our Day of Prayer packet will answer these questions and point us to the one place where comfort and peace can be found. That place is alone with God in prayer.

My sisters, we must connect to our source of strength, comfort and peace and that connection comes when we pray. If you are feeling empty, lonely, afraid, hopeless, then stop whatever you are doing right now and seek your Father in prayer. Tell Him how you feel, ask Him to fill you with strength, courage, joy, and peace of mind. He will answer. He always does.

Remember these words found in 1 Chronicles 16:11, 12:

"Glory in His holy name;
Let the hearts of those rejoice who seek the LORD!
Seek the LORD and His strength;
Seek His face evermore!"

Joyfully,

Heather-Dawn Small
Women's Ministries Director

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About the Author

Cindy Tutsch, DMin., most recently served until retirement as an Associate Director of the Ellen G. White Estate at the General Conference of Seventh-day Adventists in Silver Spring, Maryland, United States of America. Her position included promoting an enthusiasm and understanding for Ellen White crossgenerationally. She has been a featured speaker at universities, convocations, Weeks of Prayer, camp meetings, and pastor-teacher training events in 61 countries—representing all 13 administrative divisions of the Seventh-day Adventist church.

Dr. Tutsch earned the BA in religion from Andrews University, the M.A. in pastoral ministry from Indiana Wesleyan University, and the doctor of ministry with an emphasis in leadership from the Andrews University Seventh-day Adventist Theological Seminary. She has been involved in youth ministry, teaching, and evangelism for 45 years, as a pastor, Bible teacher, lay ministries coordinator, television host, literature evangelism leader, and conference youth director. She initiated Youth Challenge in North America, an evangelistic outreach that uses teens to teach Bible studies and Revelation Seminars, do service projects for the community, and distribute gospel literature door to door. She is the recipient of several awards for excellence in ministry and teaching, and was an honored alumnus of Andrews University.

She is the author of four books, including *Ellen White on Leadership: Guidance for those who influence others*, and scores of articles in Adventist publications.

She and her husband, Ulrich, especially enjoy outdoor recreation with their children and grandchildren.

More at www.cindytutsch.com

Prayer Focus

As women we are called to pray, and Ellen G. White, a woman of prayer gives us this counsel:

- "Pray, yes, pray as you have never prayed before, that you may not be deluded by Satan's devices, that you may not be given up to a heedless, careless, vain spirit, and attend to religious duties to quiet your own conscience" (*Testimonies for the Church* 2:144).
- "The idea that prayer is not essential is one of Satan's most successful devices to ruin souls. Prayer is communion with God, the Fountain of wisdom, the Source of strength, and peace, and happiness" (*Child Guidance*, 518).
- "We know not one day how strong will be our conflict the next. Satan lives, and is active, and every day we need to cry earnestly to God for help and strength to resist him" (*Testimonies for the Church* 1:340).

Our focus this year is "Praying in the Last Days." (suggested quotes, emphasis supplied)

- "If Christians would associate together, speaking to each other of the love of God and of the precious truths of redemption, their own hearts would be refreshed and they would refresh one another. We may be daily learning more of our heavenly Father, gaining a fresh experience of His grace; then we shall desire to speak of His love; and as we do this, our own hearts will be warmed and encouraged. **If we thought and talked more of Jesus, and less of self, we should have far more of His presence**" (*Steps to Christ*, 101).
- "Till the conflict is ended, there will be those who will depart from God. Satan will so shape circumstances that unless we are kept by divine power, they will almost imperceptibly weaken the fortifications of the soul. We need to inquire at every step, "Is this the way of the Lord?" So long as life shall last, there will be need of guarding the affections and the passions with a firm purpose. **Not one moment can we be secure except as we rely upon God, the life hidden with Christ.** Watchfulness and prayer are the safeguards of purity" (*Prophets and Kings*, 83).
- "The earnest prayers of this faithful few will not be in vain. When the Lord comes forth as an avenger, He will also come as a protector of all those who have preserved the faith in its purity and kept themselves unspotted from the world. It is at this time that God has promised to avenge His own elect which cry day and night unto Him, though He bear long with them" (*Testimonies for the Church* 5: 209,210).
- **"If Satan sees that he is in danger of losing one soul, he will exert himself to the utmost to keep that one.** And when the individual is aroused to his danger, and, with distress and fervor, looks to Jesus for strength, Satan fears that he will lose a captive, and he calls a reinforcement of his angels to hedge in the poor soul, and form a wall of darkness around him, that heaven's light may not reach him. But if the one in danger perseveres, and in his helplessness casts himself upon the merits of the blood of Christ, our Saviour listens to the earnest prayer of faith, and sends a reinforcement of those angels that excel in strength to deliver him. Satan cannot endure to have his powerful rival appealed to, for he fears and trembles before His strength and majesty. **At the sound of fervent prayer, Satan's whole host trembles.** He continues to call legions of evil angels to accomplish his object. And when angels, all-powerful, clothed with the armory of heaven, come to the help of the fainting, pursued soul, Satan and his host fall back, well knowing that their battle is lost. The willing

subjects of Satan are faithful, active, and united in one object. And although they hate and war with one another, yet they improve every opportunity to advance their common interest. But the great Commander in heaven and earth has limited Satan's power" (Testimonies for the Church 1:345, 346).

What do we need for the end time? Based on Joshua's needs, our prayers should lead us to:

- Expect to hear from God.
- Confess our sins.
- Remember how God has led us in the past.
- Ask for courage and faith.
- Create a relationship with God.
- Plead for the Holy Spirit experience.
- Anticipate the Latter Rain power.
- Prepare for battle with the enemy.
- Listen for God's command.
- Recognize God's voice.

Always remember the six issues that impact women globally and keep them in constant prayer.

1. Abuse
2. Poverty
3. Health
4. Illiteracy
5. Workload
6. Leadership opportunities

Program Notes

Please feel free to translate, adjust, and edit the resource packet according to your division's needs, including the best Bible version for your use. Also, you are free to adapt the packet according to your cultural audience. When your division has translated the assigned packet for French, Portuguese, and Spanish, please send us a digital file to share with our sisters who need it.

Outline of Divine Service

A Suggested Order of Worship

Hymn of praise #6, *Seventh-day Adventist Hymnal*

“O Worship the Lord”

Call to worship #710, *Seventh-day Adventist Hymnal*

“Bow Down Your Ear, O Lord, Hear Me”

From Psalm 86, NKJV

Pastoral prayer

Scripture reading Joshua 1:7-9, any version

⁷ Only be strong and very courageous, that you may observe to do according to all the law which Moses My servant commanded you; do not turn from it to the right hand or to the left, that you may ^[a]prosper wherever you go. ⁸ This Book of the Law shall not depart from your mouth, but you^[b] shall meditate in it day and night, that you may observe to do according to all that is written in it. For then you will make your way prosperous, and then you will have good success. ⁹ Have I not commanded you? Be strong and of good courage; do not be afraid, nor be dismayed, for the LORD your God is with you wherever you go” (NKJV).

Children’s story

We recommend choosing someone to share a personal experience of answered prayer.

Call for the offering

Special music or

Hymn of consecration #478, *Seventh-day Adventist Hymnal*

“Sweet Hour of Prayer”

Sermon “Praying in the Last Days”

Hymn of response #485, *Seventh-day Adventist Hymnal*

“I Must Tell Jesus”

Sermon

Praying in the Last Days

By Cindy Tutsch, D.Min.

Joshua 5:13-15, NIV

¹³ Now when Joshua was near Jericho, he looked up and saw a man standing in front of him with a drawn sword in his hand. Joshua went up to him and asked, "Are you for us or for our enemies?"

¹⁴ "Neither," he replied, "but as commander of the army of the LORD I have now come." Then Joshua fell facedown to the ground in reverence, and asked him, "What message does my Lord have for his servant?"

¹⁵ The commander of the LORD's army replied, "Take off your sandals, for the place where you are standing is holy." And Joshua did so.

Imagine the tension! Moses had passed away, Joshua is now the new leader of Israel, and it is finally time to enter Canaan. But the rushing waters of the Jordan River stand formidably between the eastern shore, beyond which lay the vast arid wilderness, and the fertile rolling hills of Canaan to the west. How will Joshua get more than a million people across the great Jordan River in its flood stage?

BIBLICAL NARRATIVE IS WRITTEN FOR OUR INSTRUCTION

Paul tells us that biblical narratives are "written down for our instruction, upon whom the end of the ages has come" (1 Corinthians 10:11, RSV). In other words, the stories of the Bible can provide principles that can help keep us strong for the very chaotic days in which we are currently living! What principles can we learn about prayer in the last days from this narrative?

- Joshua **remembers** what God had done in the past, when the waters of the Red Sea parted.
- Joshua **expects to hear** from the Lord before he organizes the crossing.
- Joshua leads the immense congregation in **confession and submission** as preparation for entering the promised land.
- Joshua doesn't rush to war with his armed men. He **waits for the Lord** to reveal His plan for conquering Canaan.

Praying like Joshua will prepare us for the time of trouble when Jesus takes us through the waters and leads us into the promised land of heaven. But before we unpack these four lessons in the narrative that are important to for us in the last days, let's quickly review the story. The question is, How will Joshua lead God's people across the river in its flood stage? We will find out that in this crisis Joshua prays, the people pray, and the priests obey.

Joshua Prays—Expecting to Hear from God

What does Joshua do in this crisis of not having transportation for crossing the river? He seeks God in prayer, of course! But for Joshua, prayer is not a passive recital of his wants or even his need of guidance, essential as that is. Joshua is accustomed to entering God's presence in prayer as an active listener, fully expecting to hear from God. And in the hour of Joshua's extreme need, God speaks words of encouragement: "Now therefore, arise, go over this Jordan, you and all this people, to the land which I am giving to them . . . Have I not commanded you? Be strong and of good courage: do not be afraid, nor be dismayed, for the LORD your God *is* with you wherever you go" (Joshua 1:2, 9, NKJV).

When Joshua prays, he does not know how God is going to make the passage across the Jordan a reality. Nevertheless, in faith that God will make a way for His people, Joshua begins preparing for the crossing by sending two spies from the Israelite camp to the city of Jericho, a stronghold of Canaanite military might.

The Israelites Pray—Confessing and Submitting

Upon receiving the positive report from the faithful spies, Joshua instructs the people to sanctify themselves in preparation for the wonder that God would work for them (Joshua 3:5). In other words, their preparation was confessing their sins to each other and to God. They were to seek God's face individually and corporately, allowing nothing to stand between them and the God Whom they believed would do great things tomorrow.

What a precious time of fellowship, prayer, confession, and song the Israelites must have had! That evening's prayer meeting surely was characterized with tears of repentance and tears of joy as the people asked for and received forgiveness from those they had wronged as well as from God.

Joshua's life of active prayer and communion with God energizes the flagging faith of God's weary people! They express their willingness to obey the commands of God: "All that you command us we will do, and where you send us we will go" (Joshua 1:16 NKJV).

The Priests Obey—Acting on Faith

In the morning, directed by the Lord, Joshua commands the priests to bear the ark of the covenant right down to the bank of the raging river and march into the water. The multitude watches.

When all the feet of the ark-bearing priests touch the waters, the tide of water on one side suddenly sweeps back. As the current flows onward on the other side, the riverbed becomes bare and dry. The priests advance solemnly toward the center of the channel and remain there with the ark, while the entire nation of more than a million people walk to the western side. Joshua commands twelve men representing the tribes to carry a large stone out of the

riverbed. Then he commands the priests bearing the ark to come ashore. The moment their feet touch the other side, when the ark is safely across the river, the wall of water floods the natural channel of the river. "Then the priests who bore the ark of the covenant of the Lord stood firm on dry ground in the midst of the Jordan; and all Israel crossed over on dry ground, until all the people had crossed completely over the Jordan" (Joshua 3:17, NKJV).

LESSON ONE: PRAYER OPENS THE HEART TO GOD

Prayer was not a duty, a ritual, or a task for Joshua. Jesus was his Friend, and Joshua regularly conversed with Him, opening his heart to God for guidance, transformation, and fellowship. What can we learn from Joshua's story? He *chose* to lean on God's instruction. He *believed* the promise (Joshua 1:7) that through God's strength he could be strong, courageous, and faithfully observe His law. He *acted* on the Word of the Lord. Later Joshua learns through the debacle with the deceitful Gibeonites that neglect of seeking God's will in every circumstance can have devastating and far-reaching consequences (Joshua 9).

What an example for us! The Bible is bursting with the promises of God! He longs to have us grasp these promises, believe that they are intended for us as well as for the original hearer, and truly expect great things from God. We can pray those promises right back to God's compassionate heart. But instead, we wrestle alone with our dilemmas. When we finally give that burden over to Jesus, recognizing by faith that He is all powerful, all knowing, all loving, we can triumph over our dark feelings. It's a large victory when we finally allow Jesus to be Lord, not just of our lives, but also of our thoughts!

We Pray—Creating Relationship with God

Communication is vital in any relationship and, especially, in our relationship with the God of heaven and earth. Yes, He knows what we are thinking, but He longs for us to tell Him directly what we are feeling.

When the Israelites are roundly defeated at Ai, Joshua falls on his face before the Lord. Notice God's response: "Why are you lying on your face like this?" (Joshua 7:10, NLT). By asking the question, God invites Joshua to verbally share with Him what is on his heart. This invitation to share doesn't require us to preach a sermon to God as our response! Sometimes all our repenting heart can manage to cry is "Save me, Lord, or I perish!" Such a prayer will be heard always by our Lord Jesus who promises, "He who comes to Me I will never cast out" (John 6:37, MEV).

Have you ever felt saddened by a lack of communication in a close relationship? It can be hurtful. Since men and women are created in God's image (Genesis 1:27), it also hurts the heart of God when we neglect to talk with Him, when we are reluctant to believe His promises

are for us. Did you know that God asks us to discuss everything about our lives with Him? The Psalmist describes it like this:

My heart has heard you say, 'Come and talk to me,'
And my heart responds, 'Lord, I am coming.'
—Psalm 27:8, NLT

Think of Jesus as the connecting link between yourself and God the Father. Imagine Jesus hugging you with one arm, while He grasps the throne of the Infinite One with His other arm. What an intimate, comforting picture of Christ responding as we pray.

You might not immediately see outward evidence of the answer to your prayer, but you can be assured that what God has promised will be realized when you need it most. When you come to Him in prayer, He will solve your challenges at just the right time and in just the right way for your best good. He is trustworthy! Those who truly commune with God and hear His voice don't just rush through a routine prayer with one hand on the doorknob of their busy lives, they take time to be in His presence!

Our world today faces unprecedented challenges. An old hymn began, "If we ever needed the Lord before, we sure do need Him now!" Polarization and divisions face our families, our church families, our nations. Painful events impact the way we do ministry, the way we witness, and evangelize. Yet, when we seek God, He will help us know what to do in this time of calamity, distress, and conflicting claims. How do we "hear what the Spirit says to the churches?" (Revelation 2:29, NKJV). We seek out His will and wisdom through prayer, unhurried, undistracted, prevailing prayer.

Jesus Prays—Preparing for Battle with the Enemy

Mark's gospel describes the prayer habits of Jesus: "Now in the morning, having risen a long while before daylight, He went out and departed to a solitary place; and there He prayed" (Mark 1:35, NKJV). Not only did Jesus get up in the early morning hours to pray, sometimes He prayed all night. Luke tells us: "Now it came to pass in those days that He went out to the mountain to pray, and continued all night in prayer to God" (Luke 6:12, NKJV). At the top of His day, before meeting its trials and challenges, Jesus prayed. If Jesus found it necessary to pray continually in preparation for battle with Satan and temptations to sin, imagine how much more we need to pray, being sinful, short-tempered, jealous, and unpredictable mortals!

Have you wondered sometimes what you would find to talk to God about if you prayed all night? A well-known devotional writer answered that question this way:

Keep your wants, your joys, your sorrows, your cares, and your fears before God. You cannot burden Him; you cannot weary Him. . . His heart of love is touched by our sorrows and even by our utterances of them. Take to Him everything that perplexes

the mind. Nothing is too great for Him to bear, for He holds up worlds. He rules over all the affairs of the universe. Nothing that in any way concerns our peace is too small for Him to notice. There is no chapter in our experience too dark for Him to read; there is no perplexity too difficult for Him to unravel. No calamity can befall the least of His children, no anxiety harass the soul, no joy cheer, no sincere prayer escape the lips, of which our heavenly Father is unobservant, or in which He takes no immediate interest. 'He healeth the broken in heart, and bindeth up their wounds.' Psalm 147:3. The relations between God and each soul are as distinct and full as though there were not another soul upon the earth to share His watchcare, not another soul for whom He gave His beloved Son (Ellen G. White, *Steps to Christ*, 100).

Paul reminds us: "Do not be anxious about anything, but in everything by prayer and supplication with thanksgiving let your requests be made known to God. And the peace of God, which surpasses all understanding, will guard your hearts and your minds in Christ Jesus" (Philippians 4:6 ,7, ESV).

LESSON TWO: PRAYER LEADS TO CONFESSION AND SUBMISSION

Part of the preparation for the outpouring of God's power at Jericho and God's Spirit at Pentecost included repentance, confession, and submission—to God and to each other. We can also plead with God that He Himself will search our hearts and show us if anything offensive to Him lingers in our thinking and acting.

Search me, O God, and know my heart;
Try me, and know my anxieties;
And see if there is any wicked way me,
And lead me in the way of everlasting.

—Psalm 139:23, 24, NKJV

We can pray in intercession for our family, our church family, our government. But perhaps the most important petition we can bring to God is asking not just for sprinkles of blessing but pleading for the special outpouring of the Holy Spirit, known as the Latter Rain, for our time. Hosea describes this:

Let us know,
Let us pursue the knowledge of the LORD.
His going forth is established as the morning;
He will come to us like the rain,
Like the latter *and* former rain to the earth.

—Hosea 6:3, NKJV

Hosea uses the agrarian example of rain to illustrate the work of the Holy Spirit in the last days. As the dew and the rain causes the farmer's seeds to germinate, so the rain prepares the crops for the harvest.

Pray–Pleading for the Holy Spirit Experience

Although there is no point in our Christian experience when we can dispense with the help of the Spirit of God, the completion of God’s work of grace in our souls is completely dependent on the special outpouring of the Holy Spirit. It is the Spirit who will wholly transform us into the likeness of Christ in character.

We could compare the early rain to the outpouring of the Holy Spirit in the days of the apostles at Pentecost (Acts 2). When those men and women prayed together in the Upper Room, tongues of fire descended upon them from heaven and enabled them to preach and teach the Good News with great to the far reaches of the then-known world.

But that event was preceded by lots of prayer! Immediately following Christ’s Ascension, Luke records that the disciples “were continually in the temple praising and blessing God” (Luke 24:53, NKJV). Fifty days after the Ascension, Luke tells us, “They were all with one accord in one place” (Acts 2:1, NKJV).

We Pray–Anticipating the Latter Rain Power

Today, as we eagerly anticipate the coming of the Spirit in Latter Rain power, we too will put away all differences, all desire for “first place” and pray together in unity and love. Then the Latter Rain of the Holy Spirit will do for us all that He did at Pentecost, and even more! This special outpouring of spiritual grace will prepare us for the trying events ahead. Not only will the latter rain empower our witness, but it will also strengthen us for even more troubling times which await the people of God before Jesus comes.

LESSON THREE: PRAYER BUILDS REMEMBRANCE

After the Israelites cross the Jordan River, with the priests yet remaining the middle of the parted river, the vast congregation of people watch twelve men, one from each tribe of Israel, and each man carries a large stone from the riverbed to the shore.

The twelve stones are set up as a monument to commemorate God’s astounding miracle. Parents are instructed to repeat to their children and grandchildren the amazing story of the mighty work God performed for His people. Every time the story is repeated, the faith of the children as well as their parents will be strengthened.

“This [will] be a sign among you when your children ask in time to come, saying, ‘What do these stones *mean* to you?’

“Then you shall answer them that the waters of the Jordan were cut off before the ark of the covenant of the Lord: when it crossed over the Jordan, the waters of the Jordan were cut off. And these stones shall be for a memorial to the children of Israel forever” (Joshua 3:7, 8, NKJV).

We Pray–Remembering How God Has Led Us

How will it affect your life if you take a reflective hour or two to begin building your own altar of remembrance? What if you write down twelve times when the Lord has done great things for you and share the stories with your family and friends? As with the people of Israel, we can set up stones of witness–remembrance–in our minds, and inscribe upon our hearts the precious stories of what God does on our behalf. As we review His dealings with us in our own pilgrim journey, we can declare out of hearts melted with gratitude, “What shall I render to the Lord for all His benefits toward me?” (Psalm 116:12, NKJV).

Trials of this life will test your faith–sometimes severely. On those days–when you are overwhelmed with challenges, obstacles, heartaches, and even tragedies, look back at the memorial you built in memory of God’s faithfulness to you. In your mind repeat to yourself how God has led you thus far–and praise Him for each stone. Let those stones in memory’s hall remind you that God has saved your life for eternity. Because He has been faithful to His promises in this life, you can be utterly sure He will keep His promise to come again and receive you unto Himself, that where He is, there you may be also (John 14:3).

LESSON FOUR: PRAYER ALLOWS GOD TO REVEAL HIS PLANS

The story of Joshua’s leadership after the crossing of the Jordan River continues teaching us about prayer. The Israelites have entered Canaan on dry ground, through the parted waters of the river, but they have not conquered it. They know little about warfare. In contrast, Canaan is inhabited by powerful warriors who know their country well and are eager to defend it with all their might and with their iron horse-drawn battle chariots.

Deuteronomy 9:1 states that the Canaanite “cities [were] great and fenced up to heaven” (KJV). The formidable fortresses meant to intimidate any intruder. The various Canaanite tribes united in a common purpose–to defeat the Hebrews who clearly intended to gain possession of the land.

Joshua needs help and he knows right where to find it. Leaving the encampment, he goes to the Lord in prayer. Suddenly, a mighty Warrior, tall, armed, commanding in demeanor, appears before Joshua. Startled, Joshua challenges, “Are you for us, or against us?” Interestingly, the Warrior who turns out to be the Lord Himself, doesn’t identify against either group, but puts Himself above all the inhabitants of the earth by stating simply, “I am commander of the Lord’s army” (Joshua 5:14). The Lord reminds Joshua, as He had done years before with Moses, that the very ground on which Joshua stands is now holy. Awestruck, Joshua falls on his face and worships.

Joshua Prays–Listening for God’s Command

Joshua doesn’t come to the Lord with a plan for the capture of Jericho. He doesn’t request approval with a rubber stamp. He simply wants to know the will of God. “At this, Joshua fell

with his face to the ground in reverence. 'I am at your command,' Joshua said. 'What do you want your servant to do?'" (Joshua 5:14b, NLT)

How often we come before the Lord with a preconceived plan, a shopping list of requests, or ideas of how to accomplish a mission that we're hoping God will approve! To fall face down before God in total reverence and submission to anything He might command is rare!

But the story becomes even more unusual. God outlines a mind-boggling strategy for a human. Joshua and all his fighting men are directed to march silently around the town of Jericho once a day for six days, and after each singular march, the soldiers are simply to return to the camp.

As Joshua continues listening to the Lord, the instructions for Day 7 must have sounded even more bizarre. "March around the town seven times, each man blowing a ram's horn. When you hear the priests give one long blast on the rams' horns, have all the people shout as loud as they can. Then the walls of the town will collapse, and the people can charge straight into the town" (adapted from Joshua 6:4, 5, NLT).

How might you have responded to those directives? Would you have sputtered, "What a recipe for mockery! I'll never convince my men to do such a thing!" The Bible tells us succinctly just how Joshua responded, "And Joshua did as he was told" (Joshua 5:15b, NLT).

The outcome, of course, is exactly as God predicted. The walls of Jericho fall, the men of Israel charge into the city, and annihilate its inhabitants. The Word of the Lord comes to pass. Joshua's faith and obedience is rewarded.

We Pray—Helping Us Recognize God's Voice

This is how our prayer must be in the uncertainty and challenges of the last days of human history. We must have a deep and living experience with God that will enable us to hear and recognize His voice and carry out His commands, no matter how unexpected those directives are to our usual way of problem solving.

Prayer is heaven's plan for success! Our heartfelt prayers of need and faith move God to action! Let's learn how to pray. Let's pray much more than we have in the past. Let's expect great things from our God of compassion and mercy. Let's pray in faith and leave the results with God.

Soon and very soon, our prayers to a God we see only through the eye of faith will become praise to a God we can see face-to-face, for all eternity.

"Look, the Lord our God has shown us his glory and greatness, and we have heard his voice from the heart of the fire. Today we have seen that God can speak to us humans, and yet we live!" (Deuteronomy 5:24, NLT).

--End of sermon--

Seminar

Why Prayer Matters

By Cindy Tutsch, DMin

[PowerPoint slide numbers are listed at beginning of these paragraphs.]

1 What should be the focus of our prayers in these Last Days? As we see the urgency of the times in which we live, what should be praying about?

2 What was Jesus' favorite topic? Love? The Kingdom of God? Forgiveness?

3 "Christ, the Great Teacher, had an infinite variety of subjects from which to choose, but the one upon which He dwelt most largely was the endowment of the Holy Spirit" (*Selected Messages 1: 156*). Certainly, then, our first priority should be to receive the Holy Spirit.

4 The Bible compares the outpouring of the Holy Spirit on the apostolic church at Pentecost to the early rains. Just before Jesus comes His Spirit will be poured out again. This is the Latter Rain, the special outpouring of God's Spirit on His people to prepare them for the time of trouble and to give them power to witness for His name.

5 This experience is described in Hosea 6:3:

"Let us know,
Let us pursue the knowledge of the LORD.
His going forth is established as the morning;
He will come to us like the rain,
Like the latter and former rain to the earth."

6 We can pray for our church, that it will be united in mission, purpose, and love, while recognizing that the whole church will never be revived. "Are we hoping to see the whole church revived? That time will never come. There are persons in the church who are not converted, and who will not unite in earnest, prevailing prayer. We must enter upon the work individually. We must pray more and talk less" (*Selected Messages 1: 122*). What else can we pray for in these last days? Certainly, our governments,

7 the leaders of our nations.

8 Paul says, "I urge, then, first of all, that requests, prayers, intercession and thanksgiving be made for everyone—for kings and all those in authority, that we may live peaceful and quiet lives in all godliness and holiness. This is good, and pleases God our Savior..." (1 Timothy

2:1-3, NIV). We can also engage in intercessory prayer for the salvation of our families, and of our friends and neighbors.

9 "Why do not two or three meet together and plead with God for the salvation of some special one, and then still another?" (*Testimonies for the Church* 7: 21).

10 "...prayer is the key in the hand of faith to unlock heaven's storehouse, where are treasured the boundless resources of omnipotence..." (*Steps to Christ*, 94, 95).

11 And I love this passage on prayer written by a 19th century visionary: "Keep your wants, your joys, your sorrows, your cares, and your fears before God. You cannot burden Him; you cannot weary Him. He who numbers the hairs of your head is not indifferent to the wants of His children. . .The relations between God and each soul are as distinct and full as though there were not another soul upon the earth to share His watchcare, not another soul for whom He gave His beloved Son." (*Steps to Christ*, 100).

12 What about intercessory prayer? What can we learn about praying for those especially close to our hearts?

13 How often have our hearts been cheered, our spirits uplifted, our courage strengthened

14 by the simple words "I'll be praying for you!" And yet how easy it is to say those words with good intentions

15 and then to go on our way and forget our promise.

16 "Let us...pray for one another, bringing one another right into the presence of God by living faith" (White, Review and Herald, 28 August 1888).

17 God wants us to pray for specific persons—neighbors, friends..."Begin to pray for souls; come near to Christ, close to His bleeding side. Let a meek and quiet spirit adorn your lives, and let your earnest, broken, humble petitions ascend to Him for wisdom that you may have success in saving not only your own soul, but the souls of others" (*Testimonies for the Church* 1: 513).

18 Is it easy to pray for others? "Those who sow in tears shall reap in joy" (Psalm 126:5). Let's talk about praying for our own children. Here is a precious promise for parents...

19 "Do not be afraid, for I am with you. I will gather you and your children from east and west and from north and south. I will bring my sons and daughters back to Israel from the distant corners of the earth" (Isaiah 43:5, 6, NLT).

20 But now the Lord says, "Do not weep any longer, for I will reward you. Your children will come back to you from the distant land of the enemy" (Jeremiah 31:16, NLT). The distant land of the enemy is a symbol of our children who are in Satan's playgrounds, far from the safety of the kingdom of grace. God's promise is for them!

And though this picture illustrates the joy of parents at the resurrection who have lost children in death, I think the text also describes the joy of parents who receive their children back from spiritual death.

21 Another beautiful promise: "Look and see, for all your children will come back to you. As surely as I live," says the Lord, "they will be like jewels or bridal ornaments for you to display. For I will fight those who fight you, and I will save your children" (Isaiah 49:18, 25b, NLT)

22 Do we quit praying for our children when they turn 18? "If parents would feel that they are never released from their burden of educating and training their children for God, if they would do their work in faith, cooperating with God by earnest prayer and work, they would be successful in bringing their children to the Saviour" (*Signs of the Times*, 9 April 1896).

23 How intense should we be? How intense was Jesus? He says, "I will search for my lost ones who strayed away, and I will bring them safely home again. I will bind up the injured and strengthen the weak" (Ezekiel 34:16).

24 Paul reminds us, "Let us not grow weary while doing good, for in due season we shall reap if we do not lose heart" (Galatians 6:9).

25 Listen to parts of a letter Ellen White wrote to her husband in 1876:

Dear Husband:

"Last night I visited Edson. . . I talked with him plainly but kindly, but his feelings were very strong that he had been [wronged]. . . I prayed over Edson, but his heart seemed unbroken. I then decided to spend the night in prayer, for our help could come from God alone. I had prayed five times and Edson four. The last time he broke all to pieces. He made an entire surrender to God and such earnest pleadings and entreaties I have seldom heard. He then prayed again and again, and seemed to be in agony of spirit, confessing his wrongs, broken in spirit, his tears freely mingled with his prayers.

26 "The room seemed to be lighted up with the presence of God. . . Salvation indeed had come to that house. He then accompanied [me] home. I did not sleep much last night and feel worn this morning, but very thankful that we broke through the cloud of darkness last night and obtained the victory.

27 "I was determined not to give [up] the struggle till victory came. I never saw Edson so deeply moved before and so sensible of his danger and weakness. . . I had spent many hours in prayer to God for Edson before I visited him. . ."

Yours with love,

Ellen

(Manuscript Release, vol. 8, 29)

28 "It is Christ who melts the hearts of our children, not our nagging or scolding or lecturing. After you have done your duty faithfully to your children, then carry them to God and ask Him to help you. Tell Him that you have done your part, and then in faith ask God to do His part, that which you cannot do" (*Child Guidance*, 256).

29 "He is pleased with the faith that takes Him at His word. 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....

30 "She laid her finger upon the texts, presenting 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....

31 "His hand is not shortened that it cannot save, neither His ear heavy that it cannot hear;" 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" (*Testimonies for the Church* 5: 322, 323).

32 "Your compassionate Redeemer is ready to hear your prayers and to render you the assistance which you need. He knows the burdens of every mother's heart and is her best friend in every emergency....

33 "His everlasting arms support the God-fearing, faithful mother. . .He sympathizes with every Christian mother in her cares and anxieties....

34 [The Savior] "is woman's best friend today and is ready to aid her in all the relations of life" (White, *Adventist Home*, 204).

35 "No work can equal that of the Christian mother. . . How often will she feel her burden's weight heavier than she can bear; and then how precious the privilege of taking it all to her sympathizing Saviour in prayer! ...

36 "She may lay her burden at His feet and find in His presence a strength that will sustain her and give her cheerfulness, hope, courage, and wisdom in the most trying hours....

37 "How sweet to the careworn mother is the consciousness of such a friend in all her difficulties! If mothers would go to Christ more frequently and trust Him more fully, their burdens would be easier" (*Adventist Home*, 204).

38 What will be the parents' reward? "With joy unutterable, parents see the crown, the robe, the harp, given to their children. The days of hope and fear are ended. The seed sown with tears and prayers may have seemed to be sown in vain, but their harvest is reaped with joy at last. Their children have been redeemed" (*Child Guidance*, 569).

39 That special outpouring of the Holy Spirit that we all need, that we must have before Jesus comes, will not happen without prayer and lots of it! Imagine a global chain praying for the outpouring of the Holy Spirit. It's already happening! Are you part of it? Did you know that for several years Seventh-day Adventists have been praying 7 days a week at 7 AM and 7 PM around the world? Wherever you are, whatever you're doing, I invite you to join them!

40 And when Christ has won the battle in our hearts, in the hearts of our children, in the hearts of our neighbors and neighbors, what then? When we've said our last prayer, shed our last tear, what then?

"There are homes for the pilgrims of earth. There are robes for the righteous, with crowns of glory and palms of victory. All that has perplexed us in the providences of God will in the world to come be made plain. The things hard to be understood will then find explanation. The mysteries of grace will unfold before us. Where our finite minds discovered only confusion and broken promises, we shall see the most perfect and beautiful harmony. We shall know that infinite love ordered the experiences that seemed most trying. As we realize the tender care of Him who makes all things work together for our good, we shall rejoice with joy unspeakable and full of glory" (*Christian Experience and Teachings of EGW*, 235.1).

May we all pray much more—as individuals, as families, as a church family! As we come into fellowship with Jesus through prayer, we will know and trust Him in deeper ways which will strengthen us for whatever challenges lie ahead. God bless you!

--end of seminar--