

A photograph showing several hands clasped together in prayer, viewed through a grid of glass panes. The hands are of various skin tones and are positioned in a way that suggests a group prayer. The lighting is dramatic, with strong highlights and deep shadows. The glass panes create a sense of depth and reflection.

*A Quick
Start*
GUIDE

PRAYER
MINISTRIES
COORDINATOR

Why Prayer Ministries?

The story is told of a man who traveled to a certain city one cold morning. As he arrived at his hotel, he noticed that the clerks, guests—everyone—was barefooted. As he entered the restaurant, he questioned a middle-aged man, "Why aren't you wearing shoes? Don't you know about shoes?"

"Of course I know about shoes," the man replied.

"Then, why don't you wear them?" the visitor asked.

"Ah, this is the question," the man replied. "Why don't I wear shoes?"

After breakfast, the visitor walked out of the hotel and into the snow. Again, every person he saw was barefooted. Curious, he asked a passerby, "Why doesn't anyone here wear shoes? Don't you know that they protect the feet from the cold?"

The passerby said, "We know about shoes. See that building? It's a shoe factory. We are so proud of the plant that we gather there every week to hear the man in charge tell us how wonderful shoes are."

"Then why don't you wear shoes?" the visitor persisted.

"Ah, that is the question," the passerby replied. "Why don't we wear shoes?"

When it comes to prayer, many Christians are like the people in that city. They know about prayer, they believe in its power, they frequently hear sermons on the subject, but it is not a vital part of their lives.

This resource guide has been compiled with the hope (and prayer) that the ideas and suggestions will encourage you to make prayer the top priority in your church. Some have asked, "Why does our church need a prayer ministry?" Here are a few reasons to encourage you:

- A prayer ministry makes it possible to develop and organize other prayer programs within the church.
- Christ said that in the last days—in the days of the harvest—we should be praying. This provides a specific avenue for obedience of this Scripture.
- When there is a special ministry and a designated person is responsible for the development of prayer programs and activities within a church, more people can become involved, more families reached, and more intercessors become actively praying for others.
- More power is promised to the praying church, as individuals, families, and church groups.
- More prayer is needed in the church, intentional prayer for pastors, teachers, church leaders, and every member.
- A separate ministry provides an opportunity for the church to be more intentional about prayer.
- A separate prayer ministry doesn't get lost among the other programs of the church.
- A prayer ministry can be the undergirding of other ministries and programs.

Most importantly, an active prayer life will carry people into a deeper relationship with Christ and with one another.

It is our prayer that the ideas and organizations presented in the next few pages will provide the necessary spark to ignite a prayer fire in your church and community.

The Prayer Coordinator

The prayer coordinator is an essential element for a praying church. He or she is a person who will help to integrate prayer into the total life of the church—at the conference level, and in the local church.

Qualifications

The person (or persons) appointed to this position should possess the following traits:

- Strong personal prayer life
- Spiritual maturity
- Gifts to organize, encourage, and give leadership in prayer emphases
- A good reputation in the church and the confidence of church leaders
- Enough time to attend key prayer events

The Work of the Prayer Coordinator/Team

One of the first places to begin will be to identify those people in the church who have indicated an interest in intercessory prayer. This can be done by placing a survey in the bulletin. Another means is to note those who volunteer for prayer during church services, then approach each one to find out their interest in this type of ministry.

Send and Receive Prayer Requests Online

Using Adventist Church Connect, the North American Division's free website system, you can send and receive prayer requests through your church's website.

Here's how it works:

Visitors click on the "prayer" link on your homepage
They enter their request
They select who can view it—the pastor or prayer coordinator, prayer team, or the entire church

In addition, ACC offers:

Free hosting
Free set-up
Free content management software
Free design options
Free support
Unlimited space
Select the modules your church needs
Adventist content that is updated daily
Easy text editor

Visit www.adventistchurchconnect.com for more information or to sign up.

Prayer Coordinators

To be involved in prayer ministry as a prayer coordinator is a calling and gift from God. Ellen White said, "One worker may be a ready speaker; another...may have the gift of sincere, earnest, fervent prayer. And each gift is to become a power for God because He works with the laborer" (9T 144).

If you are not yet involved in this ministry, but sense this gift or calling, discuss the matter with the pastoral team of your church.

Next, the coordinator should research and evaluate the church's current prayer ministries—both at the conference and local church levels. Contact other churches to see what they are doing in this area.

Once you have found individuals who show an interest in intercessory prayer, meet to decide who will pray, plan, and communicate prayer initiatives.

The **conference** coordinator will work with the pastors in the identification and selection of a respected person in each church to serve as the local church prayer coordinator.

Provide for training, suggestions, materials, and networking.

Help in the implementation of plans for prayer partners and/or individuals committed to daily prayer for specific people—by name—pastors, teachers, publishing and medical workers, and church leaders at the conference, union, division, and General Conference.

Some avenues for exploration could be: Prayer in the Worship Service, Family Prayer, Prayer Telephone Ministry, Prayer Emphasis Week, Prayer Chains, Prayer Partners, Prayer Meetings, Senior Intercessors, Evangelism Prayer Groups, Prayer Retreats, and Day of Prayer Activities.

Getting Started

When people pray, things happen! With the exception of God's grace, prayer is the most abundant—and underused—resource available to the church. Where prayer has been emphasized, the church has grown.

"Ask, and it will be given you; search, and you will find; knock, and the door will be opened to you. For everyone who asks receives, and everyone who searches finds, and for everyone who knocks, the door will be opened." —Matthew 7:7, 8

Prayer is a resource available to the church at all times. A prayer ministry will make use of this resource to provide strength, guidance, and blessings to the church staff and members, the community, and the world.

Begin with Prayer

Churches that want to start a prayer ministry need to **begin with prayer**. God is eager for us to ask for help. He wants us to ask—and to keep asking. The more time we spend in prayer at the beginning, the stronger the prayer ministry will be. God gives confirmation to people through a sense of peace about a decision, and by His leading in circumstances.

We need to pray for God's timing. Waiting on God's timing makes the job easier.

Seek a Vision

A vision provides a sense of purpose, direction, and motivation for prayer ministry. A lasting vision is not just a human idea.

Many people, when they have seen a vision, feel inadequate to carry it out. When we see the need and how great it is, we might very well feel inadequate to meet it. Many people in the Bible who received a vision from God and saw the task placed before them felt just this way. God assured Paul, as He assures us today, that His grace is still sufficient for us, and His power is still made perfect in our weakness (paraphrased from 2 Corinthians 12:9).

Communicate the vision to the group's members. The vision needs to be lifted up for others to grasp and follow. It isn't enough to share the vision once; it needs to be done repeatedly. Ask God to give clear direction. Seeking the heart of God and the guidance of the Holy Spirit can take some time. We don't need to be in a hurry. It is God's ministry. He will provide all we need.

Explore Resources

What resources are available for starting a prayer ministry?

At the early stages, you might look especially for these resources:

- A handbook or manual giving principles, ideas, and methods. You can also search the Internet.
- A resource person with experience in prayer ministry and prayer ministry organization.
- At least one person who is willing to pray regularly for the planning, development, and implementation of the new prayer ministry.

How to Start a Prayer Ministry

1. Wait on the Lord. Luke 24:49
2. Enlist others to pray with you. Matthew 18:16-20
3. Set a side a place to pray. 2 Chronicles 7:12-15, Luke 11:1
4. Make time to pray. Psalm 32:6
5. Intercede for others. Isaiah 59:16, Ezekiel 22:30
6. Make a budget. Romans 14:12, Luke 16:2
7. Train others to pray. Matthew 28:20
8. Hold each other accountable. Matthew 16:27, Romans 2:6

- It might also be helpful to attend a conference or seminar on prayer, especially one that deals with organizing prayer ministry.

Planning a Prayer Ministry

Schedule a time for **planning**. A plan is a flexible tool. Remember that a good ministry plan is dynamic, not static. Things change. A good plan grows out of the vision.

Decide on key values. There are a variety of possible values that could be highlighted through prayer ministry. A church might be most concerned about in-depth study and discipleship programs, versus a focus on reaching new pray-ers. Individual prayers, group Bible study with prayer, and ministry have become central values in many places.

Develop a strategy. We need to ask God what form the ministry needs to take. Be sure church leaders understand and approve of the prayer ministry. Better yet, make sure the ministry has enthusiastic leaders who will lead by example. Recognize that people have different backgrounds and levels of Christian maturity, as well as varying schedules and commitments. Design ministries that will be suitable for people at several levels of maturity and prayer times that will accommodate a variety of schedules. There are many creative ways that large and small churches can offer a variety of prayer experiences.

A Workable Ministry Plan

A useful, workable ministry plan includes the following elements:

- A compelling mission statement
- Practical goals
- Clear objectives
- Specific action plans
- Adequate job descriptions for key responsibilities
- A basic organizational chart showing who is responsible to whom
- A simple budget, if money will be spent

Try to state the mission in one clear sentence. Stating the mission this way helps the ministry to be focused and valuable to the church family. Here is an example statement: The mission of the prayer ministry is to pray, teach others to pray, to study the Scriptures together, to provide prayer and ministry opportunities, and to participate in the fulfillment of our church's vision and mission as we are inspired by the Holy Spirit.

Goals provide some details about the mission plan. For example (and in fulfillment of the above statement) some goals might be:

1. To encourage people to pray and/or pray more.
2. Teach church members and others to pray.
3. Develop opportunities for people to become more involved in prayer, Bible study, and ministry.

How to Recruit People to Pray

1. Recruit from the pulpit.
2. Don't allow prayer emphasis to conflict with other major church events.
3. Print the purpose of prayer in your bulletins or newsletter.
4. Get groups to sign up for specific prayer times.
5. Put up a sign-up board in church foyer.
6. Orient new members to your prayer commitment.
7. Have people commit to a certain term of prayer.
8. Emphasize special considerations (i.e. convenient times, praying together or alone).
9. Have "Prayer Captains" be in charge of prayer for a certain day or week.
 - a. Pick up the sign up sheet
 - b. Call to encourage people to pray
 - c. Thank members for their faithfulness in praying
 - d. Keep request and answer information up-to-date
10. Make public the results of prayer.

Objectives will further define the ministry. They highlight the steps needed to carry out a goal. Objectives describe a cluster of activities that contribute to a goal. Too many objectives can be difficult to monitor. They need to be reviewed regularly.

Action plans will outline the specific steps needed to fulfill each objective.

Job descriptions let people know what is expected of them. They may be able to help in the development of their own job description. Identify the key positions, and describe the responsibilities. Try to make the job descriptions brief and simple.

Share the plan. Ask for suggestions for improvement and/or confirmation of the plan. Share the plan to seek endorsement. Pray for God's wisdom and timing and for God to prepare the hearts of the presenters and the listeners to receive and embrace the prayer ministry.

- Begin with the people and groups who will give the greatest support. This will build both confidence and momentum.
- Next, share the plan with the church leaders. If the leaders do not endorse the plan, do not present it to the church. Return to prayer, revise the plan, and/or try a different approach for winning support.
- Finally, when the leaders have given their support, present the plan to the rest of the church so everyone has a chance to learn about and support it.

Present the plan. The actual presentation could incorporate the following:

- Lay out your plan, beginning with the vision.
- Ask for the group's input and listen to what they have to say.
- Assuming no strong objections have surfaced, ask for the group's support of the vision and plan.
- If objections have been raised, try to clarify what needs to happen before the plan can be adopted.
- Ask for the group's involvement in the new ministry.
- Finally, pray that all who are touched by this ministry will be receptive to it and ultimately transformed by it.

Avoiding Pitfalls

When we begin to think about implementing a prayer ministry, we will most likely face a number of challenges. Challenges are not all bad. They often bring us to our knees in prayer. There are, however, some things we can do to avoid the worst pitfalls when we begin.

Set an example. The example of a church's leaders is key to starting a prayer ministry. People who are not church leaders can act to bring about a vision for prayer ministry. Pray for the leaders and enthusiastically support whatever ministry God is doing in the church. Wait patiently for God's timing.

Start with the basics. The way to begin learning about prayer is to pray. There are a number of simple ways to teach beginners to pray:

- Silent prayer
- Sentence completion prayers
- Short sentence prayers

Keep it short. Short prayers are often the most effective. When we pray, we want to use everyday words. Use language that is meaningful.

Choose a focus. As in other groups, a prayer group needs a focus or purpose. A focus helps keep a prayer group motivated and organized. If a church has more than one prayer group, groups can be organized around demographics. Even groups that have a focus can benefit from selecting specific topics for prayer.

Report positive results. Both those who pray and those who ask for prayers need to hear about how God answers their prayers.

Prayer as a Ministry

Our objectives include the development of the following:

1. "An intense desire...for a favorable opportunity to witness for Christ,
2. An intense desire to express gratitude and devotion to Him, and
3. A burning desire to be like Christ" (OHC 105).

Prayer is exciting and offers many opportunities for ministry. Choose the ministries that suit your church.

Help people grow. Start with something easy. Adapt ideas to fit your needs. Look for ideas from other places.

Start-Up Ministries

Staff Prayer
Prayer Outreach
Prayer Cards
Prayer Calendar
Prayer List for Special Needs
General Prayer Chain
Day of Prayer Activities
Praying Leaders
Prayer in the Worship Service
Teaching Children to Pray
Prayer Triplets

Intermediate Ministries

Prayer Coordinator
Prayer Tape Ministry
Prayer Vigil
Prayer Retreat or Seminar
Open Prayer Meeting
Prayer Small Group
Membership Intercession Ministry
Prayer Walking
Prayer Breakfast
Prayer Emphasis Week or Month
Prayer Care Program
Prayer Chapel
Family Prayer
Prayer Cells
Church Prayer Support Groups
Prayer Groups for World Missions
Pastor's Prayer Support Groups
The Prayer Room

10 Ways the Holy Spirit Works in the Lives of Unbelievers

1. It woos or draws people to Jesus.
2. It sends witnesses to testify to an unbeliever.
3. It convicts of sin and guilt.
4. It convinces unbelievers of truth.
5. It opens the heart to believe in Christ.
6. It regenerates or changes.
7. It seals us in Christ.
8. It gives new believers assurance.
9. It develops the character of Jesus in the new believer.
10. It incorporates people into the body of Christ.

Advanced Ministries

Prayer Team Ministry
Ministry of Intercession
Healing Prayer Ministry
Prayer Partnership Ministry
Intercessory Support Ministry
Prayer Telephone Ministry
Concert of Prayer
School of Prayer
House of Prayer
The School of Prayer
Prayer Guides
Senior Intercessors

"Here are my directions: Pray much for others; plead for God's mercy upon them; give thanks for all He is going to do for them...This is good and pleases God our Saviour, for He longs for all to be saved" (1 Timothy 2:1, 4, LB).

"I thank God...[for you] as without ceasing I remember you in my prayers night and day" (2 Timothy 1:3).

"Every time I say your name in prayer—which is practically all the time—I thank God for you" (Paul about Timothy in 2 Timothy 1:3, Message).

"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" (PP 203).

—From *Face to Face with God in Your Church*
Bjorn Pederson, Phoenix, Arizona

#Ideas for Prayer Ministries

1. Develop a prayer hedge around yourself by getting at least one person to pray for you.
2. Develop a prayer hedge around your pastor.
3. Start a prayer request and answer book for your church.
4. Start secret prayer partners.
5. Encourage the members of your church to find a prayer partner and pray together on a regular basis.
6. Develop a telephone prayer chain for your church.
7. Plan a prayer room for your church.
8. Plan a prayer retreat/seminar for your church.
9. Plan a prayer breakfast for your church or community.
10. Plan a prayer potluck.
11. Plan prayer concerts/vigils.
12. Have a prayer walk for your community and as you walk pray for
 - a. Leaders in your community
 - b. Famous or influential people
 - c. Underprivileged
 - d. Single parents
 - e. Young mothers
 - f. Children
 - g. Families

The Praying Church

What can YOUR church do to grow strong in prayer? Here are the keys to having a praying church:

1. Praying leaders are essential.

The church's greatest deficiency today is in prayer—not in programs, strategies, materials, or ideas. The power for ministry can be released only through prayer.

2. Give prayer high priority in the church's life and ministry.

It is impossible to explain the power and effectiveness of the New Testament church without reference to prayer. Prayer is the most important work in God's kingdom. It is a labor that has no substitute.

3. Correct thinking about prayer is important.

God rules the world through the prayers of His people. Christ actually meant prayer to be the great power by which His church should do its work.

4. Clear communication of needs and answers to prayer is vital.

If we expect our prayers to make a difference, it is important to watch for the answers. A simple way to increase the amount of effective prayer within a congregation is to effectively communicate prayer needs and answers.

5. Prayer should be linked to ministry.

Ministry without prayer becomes work in the power of the flesh. Prayer without ministry is complacent Christianity.

6. Make times, ways, and places for people to pray together.

This encourages consistency in prayer. Praying with others expands our prayer life. As we listen to others pray, we learn from them things that will strengthen our own prayer life. Praying together not only strengthens our faith, but mutual praying makes the large task of prayer more manageable.

7. Encourage personal devotions.

Private prayers are an indispensable part of every Christian's life. It is the highest activity in which any soul can engage.

In personal prayer we dare to look into our hearts to discern those most private problems and issues we need to place before the Lord.

8. Encourage family devotions.

If family worship is neglected, other attempts at prayer are like sprinkling the foliage of a plant with water while leaving the roots dry. Family devotions should be part of every Christian family's experience.

Why Do We Need Prayer Centers?

1. It makes it possible to schedule prayer in a systematic way.
2. It promotes agreement in prayer.
3. It provides a place to register deeds of God in the life of the church.
4. It shows ownership of the church's vision to win the city for Christ.
5. It gives advantages to evangelism.
6. It provides a place to practice prayer.
7. It has an inclusive impact on the church.
8. It provides a quiet place to hear the voice of God.
9. It provides a place for prolonged periods of prayer.
10. It provides a place where people can make a commitment to Jesus Christ.

Biblical Perspectives on Prayer

- God's answer is never a forced response. It is purely a gift of grace.
- You seek for God's will in your prayer—and in doing so you marvelously find your needs fulfilled, your purposes achieved, and your desires responded to.
- God takes into account every prayer ever offered and is forever involved with us in charting the course of history.
- Here is the hope of our prayer: the kingdom of the enemy will fall and all its false pride will be exposed.
- The more we pray, the more our horizons expand and the more we come to expect from a supernatural, miracle-working God.
- When we short-circuit prayer, we give our lives and ministry a secularistic or humanistic framework to work with.
- Prayer is giving focus to the mission of the church.
- Does God exist to help fulfill our plans, or do we exist to fulfill the plans of God?

God has chosen PRAYER as the key by which His church does its work. Through PRAYER we impact the world for God.

—*The Praying Church SOURCEBOOK* - by Alvin J Vander Griend with Edith L. Bajema
Church Development Resources © 1990

How to Spend a Day in Prayer

"I never thought a day could make such a difference," a friend said to me. "My relationship to everyone seems improved."

"Why don't I do it more often?"

Comments like these come from those who set aside a personal day of prayer.

With so many activities—important ones—clamoring for our time, real prayer is considered more a luxury than a necessity. How much more so spending a day in prayer!

The Bible gives us three time-guides for personal prayer. There is the command to "pray without ceasing"—the spirit of prayer—keeping so in tune with God that we can lift our hearts in request or praise anytime through the day.

There is also the practice of a quiet time or morning watch—seen in the life of David (Psalm 5:3), of Daniel (6:10), and of the Lord Jesus (Mark 1:35). This daily time specified for meditation in the Word of God and prayer is indispensable to the growing, healthy Christian.

Then there are examples in Scripture of extended time given to prayer alone. Jesus spent whole nights praying. Nehemiah prayed upon hearing of the plight of Jerusalem. Three times Moses spent forty days and forty nights alone with God.

How to Go About It

Having set aside a day or portion of a day for prayer, pack a lunch and start out. Find a place where you can be alone, away from distractions. This may be a wooded area near home or your backyard. An outdoor spot is excellent if you can find it but don't get sidetracked into nature studies and fritter away your time. If you find yourself watching the squirrels or the ants, direct your observation by reading Psalm 104 and meditating on the power of God in creation.

Take along a Bible, a notebook and pencil, a hymnbook, and perhaps a devotional book. I like to have with me the booklet *Power Through Prayer* by E.M. Bounds and read a chapter or two as a challenge to the strategic value of prayer.

Even if you have all day, you will want to use it profitably. Lose no time in starting, and start purposefully.

Prayer and Fasting!

"They are more ready for active labor than for humble devotion, more ready to engage in outward religious service than in the inner work of the heart. Meditation and prayer are neglected for bustle and show. Religion must begin with emptying and purifying the heart, and must be nurtured by daily prayer...There is need of fasting, humiliation and prayer over our decaying zeal and languishing spirituality" (4T 535).

Wait on the Lord

Divide the day into three parts: waiting on the Lord, prayer for others, and prayer for yourself.

As you wait on the Lord, don't hurry. You will miss the point if you look for some mystical or ecstatic experience. Just seek the Lord, waiting on Him. Isaiah 40:31 promises that those who wait upon the Lord will renew their strength. Psalm 27:14 is one of dozens of verses which mention waiting on Him, as in Psalm 62:5, which says, "Find rest, O my soul, in God alone; my hope comes from Him."

Wait on Him first to realize His presence. Read through a passage like Psalm 139, grasping the truth of His presence with you as you read each verse. Ponder the impossibility of being anywhere in the

universe where He is not. Often we are like Jacob when he said, "Surely the Lord is in this place; and I knew it not!" (Genesis 28:16, KJV).

Wait on Him also for cleansing. The last two verses of Psalm 139 lead you into this. Ask God to search your heart as these verses suggest. When we search our own hearts it can lead to imaginations, morbid introspection, or anything the enemy may want to throw before us. But when the Holy Spirit searches, He will bring to your attention that which should be confessed and cleansed. Psalms 51 and 32, David's songs of confession, will help you. Stand upon the firm ground of 1 John 1:9 and claim God's faithfulness to forgive whatever specific sins you confess.

If you realize you've sinned against a brother or sister, make a note of it so you won't forget to set it right. Otherwise, the rest of the day will be hindered. God won't be speaking to you if there is something between you and someone else that you haven't planned to take care of at the earliest possible moment.

As you wait on God, ask for the power of concentration. Bring yourself back from daydreaming.

Next, wait on God to worship Him. Psalms 103, 111, and 145 are wonderful portions to follow as you praise the Lord for the greatness of His power. Most of the Psalms are prayers. Or turn to Revelation 4 and 5, and use them in your praise to Him. There is no better way to pray scripturally than to pray Scripture.

If you brought a hymnbook you can sing to the Lord. Some wonderful hymns have been written that put into words what we could scarcely express ourselves. Maybe you don't sing very well—be sure you're out of earshot of someone else and "make a joyful noise unto the Lord." He will appreciate it.

This will lead you naturally into thanksgiving. Reflect upon the wonderful things God has done for you and thank Him for these—for your own salvation and spiritual blessings, for your family, friends, and opportunities. Go beyond that which you thank the Lord for daily and take time to express appreciation to Him for countless things He's given.

Pray for Others

Now is the time for the unhurried, more detailed prayer for others you don't get to ordinarily. Remember people in addition to those for whom you usually pray. Trace your way around the world, praying for people by countries.

Here are three suggestions as to what to pray:

1. Ask specific things for them. Perhaps you remember or have jotted down various needs people have mentioned. Use requests from missionary prayer letters. Pray for spiritual strength, courage, physical stamina, mental alertness, and so on. Imagine yourself in the situations where these people are and pray accordingly.
2. Look up some of the prayers in Scripture. Pray what Paul prayed for other people in the first chapter of Philippians and Colossians and in the first and third chapter of Ephesians. This will help you advance in your prayer from the stage of "Lord, bless so and so and help them to do such and such."
3. Ask for others what you are praying for yourself. Desire for them what the Lord has shown you.

If you pray a certain verse or promise of Scripture for a person, you may want to put the reference by his or her name on your prayer list, and use this verse as you pray for that person the next time. Then use it for thanksgiving as you see the Lord answer.

Pray for Yourself

The third part of your day will be prayer for yourself. Again, let your prayer be ordered by Scripture and ask the Lord for understanding according to Psalm 119:18. Meditate upon verses of Scripture you have memorized or promises you have previously claimed from the Word. Reading a whole book of the Bible through, perhaps aloud, is a good idea. Consider how it might apply to your life.

"Lord, what do You think of my life?" is the attitude of this portion of your day of prayer. Consider your main objectives in the light of what you know to be God's will for you. Jesus said, "My food is to do the will of Him who sent me and to finish His work" (John 4:34). Do you want to do God's will more than anything else? Is it really your highest desire?

Then consider your activities—what you do—in the context of your objectives. God may speak to you about rearranging your schedule, cutting out certain activities that are good but not best, or some things that are entanglements or impediments to progress. Strip them off. You may be convicted about how you spend your evenings or weekends, when you could use the time more advantageously and still get the recreation you need.

As you pray, record your thoughts on your activities and use of time, and plan for better scheduling. Perhaps the need for better preparation for your Sabbath school class or a personal visit with an individual will come to your mind. The Lord may impress you to do something special for someone. Make a note of it.

During this part of your day, bring any problems or decisions you are facing and seek the mind of God on them. It helps to list the factors involved in these decisions or problems. Pray over these factors and look into the Scriptures for guidance. You may be led to a promise or direction from the passages with which you have already filled your mind during the day.

After prayer, you may reach some definite conclusions upon which you can base firm convictions. It should be your aim in a day of prayer to come away with some conclusions and specific direction—some stakes driven. However, do not be discouraged if this is not the case. It may not be God's time for a conclusive answer to your problem. And you may discover that your real need was not to know the next step, but to have a new revelation of God himself.

In looking for promises to claim, there's no need to thumb through looking for new or startling ones. Just start with the promises you already know. Chew over some old familiar promises the Lord has given you before, ones you remember as you think back. Pray about applying these verses to your life.

I have found some of the greatest blessings from a new realization of promises I already knew, the familiar promises the Lord gives during these protracted times alone, and put the date and a word or two in the margin beside them.

Variety is important during your day of prayer. Read and pray a while, then walk around. A friend of mine paces the floor of his room for his prayer time. Rather than get cramped in one position, take a walk and stretch.

As outside things pop into your mind, simply incorporate these items into prayer. If it's some business item you must not forget, jot it down. Have you noticed how many things come to mind while you are sitting in church? It will be natural for things to occur to you during your prayer day that you should have done, so put them down, pray about them and plan how you can take care of them and when. Don't just push them aside or they will plague you the rest of the day.

At the end of the day summarize in your notebook some things God has spoken to you about. This will be profitable to refer to later.

Two Questions

The result of your day of prayer should be answers to the two questions Paul asked the Lord on the Damascus road (Acts 22:6-10). Paul's first question was, "Who are you, Lord?" The Lord replied, "I am Jesus." You will be seeking to know Him, to find out who He is. The second question Paul asked was, "What shall I do, Lord?" The Lord answered him specifically. This should be answered or reconfirmed for you in that part of the day when you unhurriedly seek His will for you.

Don't think you must end the day with some new discovery or extraordinary experience. Wait on God and expose yourself to His Word. Looking for a new experience or insight you can share with someone will get you off the track. True, you may gain some new insight, but often this can just take your attention from the real business. The test of such a day is not how exhilarated we are when the day is over but how it works into life tomorrow. If we have really exposed ourselves to the Word and come into contact with God, it will affect our daily life. That is what we want.

Days of prayer don't just happen. Besides the attempts of Satan to keep us from praying, the world around us has plenty to offer to fill our time. We have to make time. Plan ahead—the first of every other month, or once a quarter.

God bless you as you do this—and do it soon! You too will probably ask yourself, "Why not pray more often?"

The purpose of a fish trap is to catch fish
and when the fish are caught, the trap is forgotten.

The purpose of a rabbit snare is to catch rabbits.
When the rabbits are caught, the snare is forgotten.

The purpose of the word is to convey ideas.
When the ideas are grasped, the words are forgotten.

Where can I find a man who has forgotten words?
He is the one I would like to talk to.

—Chuang Tzu

Our society is not a community radiant with the love of Christ,
but a dangerous network of domination and manipulation
in which we can easily get entangled and lose our soul.

The basic question is whether we ministers of Jesus Christ
have not already been so deeply molded by the seductive powers
of our dark world that we have become blind to our own
and other people's fatal state and have lost our power
and motivation to swim for our lives.

—Henri J.M. Nouwen

Making Your Prayer Life Effective

1. Make time for prayer! Unless it is a habit, your prayer life will always suffer. The solution is a consistent prayer habit. David says, "Morning by morning O Lord, you hear my voice; morning by morning I lay my requests before you and wait in expectation" (Psalm 5:3). David had learned the value of a systematic daily prayer habit. Don't try to find time—make the time for prayer daily.

2. Find a quiet place for prayer! To really enhance your prayer life we recommend that you find a special place for prayer. Jesus said, "When you pray, go into your room..." (Matthew 6:6). Our Lord was not speaking of just an attitude in prayer, but a specific place for prayer. Further, Jesus not only talked about this, He practiced it. Every Christian ought to have a special place for prayer.

3. Recognize God for what He is! All prayer should begin with a recognition of the nature of God because it is precisely God's nature that gives us confidence that our prayer will be answered. To recognize God's nature is called praise. The model prayer—the Lord's Prayer—begins and ends with praise. Praise is the gate pass to heaven (Psalm 100:4). Begin prayer with **ADORATION - "A."**

4. Confess your failures! Early in each prayer time we need to consider the matter of confession. The psalmist reminds us, "If I had cherished sin in my heart, the Lord would not have listened" (Psalm 66:18). Scripture makes it clear that unconfessed sin blocks the channel between God and the pray-er. A daily prayer habit gives us special time to evaluate our spiritual condition. Confession is a prerequisite to powerful praying. Willful sin and prayer are totally incompatible. A vital part of our prayer should be this time of self-examination. **CONFESSION is the "C."**

5. Thank God for what He has done! Not only should prayer begin and end with praise, but it should be seasoned throughout with thanksgiving. Praise is defined as adoring God for what He is; thanksgiving is thanking God for what He has done. This involves "specifics." The next time you pray, make a mental list of all God has done for you. Review past gifts from God. Gratitude is a great atmosphere in which to petition the Father. **THANKSGIVING is the "T."**

6. Bring God your needs and petitions. Pray with God's Word. George Mueller, the great orphanage leader of the last century, was known for his tremendous faith in God as well as his powerful prayer life. Without a doubt the secret lay in the fact that George Mueller never prayed without an open Bible. He had learned the power of God's words to Jeremiah, "Is not my word like fire...and like a hammer that breaks a rock in pieces" (Jeremiah 23:29). Your **SUPPLICATIONS are the "S."**

ACTS, an acronym—for adoration, confession, thanksgiving and supplication—provides a structure for prayer.

7. Don't give up! Jacob provides us with a unique example of one who persisted until he received a desired blessing from the Lord. He said, "I will not let you go, unless you bless me" (Genesis 32:26). Many believers begin their journey of prayer with great intentions, only to give up as the going gets rough. Persistence is a prerequisite to spiritual power. When it comes to prayer, we must declare as the psalmist, "My heart is fixed, O God, my heart is steadfast" (Psalm 57:7). Do everything you can to strengthen your prayer life. It is true that more things are wrought by prayer than this world dreams.

8. Meditate in God's presence. Think about what you are reading in Scripture and how it applies to your life personally. Meditation is not only meaningful, but vital to balanced praying. Psalms begin with this statement, "Blessed is the man that...delights in the law of the Lord; and on His law he meditates day and night" (Psalm 1:1, 2). The only verse that mentions "success" is a command to meditate day and night on God's Word (Joshua 1:8). Ask yourself what you have learned of God from the passages of Scripture and how He is speaking to you.

9. Sing a new song! Many Christians are rediscovering the joy of singing aloud during prayer. In the Bible singing is vital in worship. Paul and Silas were arrested and jailed for preaching the Gospel (Acts 16:25), but were found singing praises. Since they did not have hymnbooks, their songs must have come from the heart. The psalmist spoke of this as "singing a new song." Because you are alone with God you won't have any embarrassment. Make up simple choruses, or sing some of your favorite hymns or choruses, and think of the words. It will be a new joy—just between you and God.

10. Pray much for others! Every prayer should have a significant portion devoted exclusively to praying for others. Christ's model prayer does not begin with **My** Father, but with **Our** Father. Not once does the prayer emphasize the personal pronouns I, me, or my. Christ's prayer says, give us, lead us, and forgive us. The emphasis is clearly on others—stressing the importance of devoting much of each prayer time to intercession.

11. Pray for ministry—and for evangelism! When praying for others, nothing is more important than their spiritual well being. Millions of people around the world are waiting to hear of Jesus. Pray for each of the pastors in your conference. Pray for the church officers and leaders of your local church and for the conference leadership. In 1 Thessalonians 5:12,13, Paul tells us to hold in high regard those who are over us in the Lord, our ministers, our pastors, teachers, and church leadership. Pray for the clergy, and for the lay members, that all will be used of God in reaching those without hope.

12. Focus your prayers! Intercessory prayer should be focused on specific needs, on our nation, and every nation of the world. David prayed, "Thou therefore, O Lord, God of hosts, the God of Israel, awake to visit all the heathen" (Psalm 59:5). Pray for specific pastors and church leaders by name. Pray for the members of your church. You may want to divide the directory into sections so that each day some part will be covered in prayer. If you are praying for the world, you could divide the countries into groups of thirty, praying for one of these groups each day of the week. Each week you will be able to visit the entire world, country by country, in prayer.

13. Plan your prayer time! Develop a plan before you go into your prayer closet. If you write your prayers, take your notebook, pen, highlighter, and Bible. If you use a structure of some kind, such as the Lord's Prayer, ACTS, or a prayer list, this may help you in your organization. Plan your time carefully and prayerfully, asking God to show you who to pray for and how to pray. Ask for His protection and guidance as you pray.

14. Learn to fast and pray! Fasting is the practice of deliberately abstaining from usual nourishment for the purpose of adding power to our prayer. Jesus made it clear that some spiritual victories can only come through fasting and prayer (Mark 9:28, 29). Set aside at least one meal per week, or even an entire day, for prayer and fasting. Focus this intense prayer on nations, individuals, or cities that seem closed to evangelism.

15. Find a prayer partner! Jesus, the Master pray-er, taught that praying with others increases prayer power. He said, "...if two of you agree on earth concerning anything that they ask, it will be done for them by my Father in heaven" (Matthew 18:19, NKJV). Our Lord made it clear that special power is released when two people agree on a given matter. Find a prayer partner who can join you at the same time you pray, even if they live hundreds of miles away, or find a person who lives close by, so you can get together regularly—in person, or by phone.

16. THE REAL SECRET Some have said that they believe that the real key to prayer—to knowing God and getting His answers—is learned from Christ. In Mark 11:24 He said, "What things soever ye desire, when ye pray, believe that ye receive them, and ye shall have them." The first word to note here is desire, and this is the key. If you don't "desire," you probably will never get an answer to that prayer. Earnest prayers of faith for yourself or for others are meaningful.

Because praying is the most important thing we do, and because praying is strenuous, some often rest for just a few minutes before they pray so they can be at their best for their most meaningful work. God gives fantastic answers. Praying is exciting and meaningful when you do it the way Christ taught.

—by Dick Eastman

Adapted by Ruthie Jacobsen, with permission from *Every Home for Christ*

Group Bible Study

Discovery - Learning the Secret

Young people and adults are discovering steps to follow and are finding that the Word of God opens up in a new and more personal way. They are "discoverers," and are finding meaningful and personal truths in the joy of discovery. They're finding that Bible study can be fun! It is possible to find the process in Bible study engaging, challenging, and a joy.

There is value in team learning. This develops self-responsibility and helps exercise shared responsibility on the part of teammates. It requires some individual study, thought, sharing, and receiving.

Team learning increases satisfaction—each one is discovering different things. The satisfaction comes from your own discoveries and secondly through those received from others. No person can ever discover all of the riches in God's Word by themselves.

Team learning develops your creative potential. By practicing some of the skills outlined in this method, you'll discover some of the truths in Scripture and that others are enriched with your discoveries. Effective team learning is dependent on the willingness of all members to study, share, listen, challenge, and question each other. Through this process you will learn to clarify your own thinking, refine your insights, and broaden your concepts. You will discover that you have much more potential as a student than you realized.

A receptive attitude is valuable. God asks of me only an open heart and an open mind so He can reveal Himself and His truths to me.

William Barclay says, "It is only when truth is discovered that it is appropriated." When someone is told a truth, it can remain external to them, and can be easily forgotten. When led to discover the truth, it becomes an integral and unforgettable part of that person.

The pattern in many Bible study groups is for the leader to be the discoverer and share with others. The others in the group can quickly forget what is taught.

Practice, patience, and perseverance are needed for learning any skill. However, you will experience many joys:

- The joy of discovering truths in the Bible yourself.
- The joy of realizing that the Bible has something special to say to you personally.
- The joy of discovering your own potential as a student.
- The joy of sharing with others the truths that have special meaning to you.
- The joy of knowing that the Holy Spirit is the Revealer of truth as you seek to discover it in His Word.
- The joy of discovering Jesus Christ as the incarnate Word.

Discovering with Others

You can become a discoverer in Bible study by yourself. However, you can multiply the effectiveness of your study by working together with others in a small group. While you may still have a leader to be your guide, your most significant learning will be from persons in your small group—from your team members.

With a methodical approach you will gain more insight and receive much greater satisfaction in your study. Often one process overlaps another. You will find that while one process leads to another, the procedure will be like a spiral in which you come back to previous processes.

The steps are Observation – Interpretation – Summarization – Application.

There is real value in doing one process at a time. Most of us have a one-track mind. We accomplish the most when we concentrate on one thing at a time. This is especially true when we first try to understand something, whether it is a piece of literature or a scientific problem.

Observation

One of the most difficult problems in helping people develop their powers of observation is to get them to believe that it has value. Some feel that application is the most important aspect of Bible study. Others want to focus on interpretation, trying to find out what the commentaries have to say about a passage.

There are some specific things to observe—key words, advice, promises, reasons, results, contrasts, illustrations, repetition, questions, important connectives, atmosphere, and general structure.

Interpretation

Begin by asking yourself questions. "I wonder why Jesus said the things He did? I wonder what He meant by what He said?" Asking yourself questions is a very important step in Bible study. It is the bridge between observation and interpretation. Ask questions for understanding.

The asking of questions has several purposes: to stimulate your thinking and to help you begin to identify those words, phrases, and statements that need interpretation. Maybe you thought you already understood these words and didn't need interpretation, but when you begin to ask yourself questions about them, you realize that you need to interpret them in order to understand.

In seeking to interpret the message of Scripture, it is very important that you wrestle with meanings. Using a dictionary to find the meaning of words, then analyzing the context of the passage brings the Bible to life.

Summarization

It will be helpful to pause and realize what you have gained and the meaning it has for you personally. Too often we approach a Bible narrative superficially. We may have heard the story so many times that it is commonplace to us, or we think of the story only in terms of its message and forget that these Bible characters were real flesh-and-blood people who lived in a certain period of history. Because of the superficial way we may approach the stories, we can be superficial in the way we interpret and apply them.

Be realistic. Try to view it in the context of the historical setting of that day. Beware of viewing it through twentieth century glasses.

Be imaginative. Most Bible stories tell only the bare facts. As you read a story, give it "flesh and blood" in your imagination. Picture yourself as part of the scene. Visualize what you would be seeing and hearing. Try to see and hear not only the words and actions of Bible persons, but also the tone of their voices, facial expressions, and bodily responses.

Be empathetic. Identify with a person, their problems, and their feelings.

Application

Personalize Scripture. Pause and ask the Holy Spirit speak to you personally about what you have learned from Scripture and how He would like to apply it in your life.

Think about the truths you have been discovering together. What would you actually do if you allowed the Lord to change your thinking and your life in some specific area? What might be the outcomes?

Discovery – Bible Study

1. Check the historical setting or background of the verses.
2. Re-interpret it and look up parallel passages.
3. Use the prophet's idea of applying this to other stories in the Bible.
4. Look at the context and who is speaking.
5. Choose one idea and study it out thoroughly.
6. If there is a prediction, look to see if it is accurate.
7. Complete the following grid for each passage studied:

Use the questions - WHO - WHAT - WHERE - WHEN - WHY - and HOW.

Under applications, apply the passage to your spiritual life.

Questions	Answers	Applications
Who?		
What?		
Where?		
When?		
Why?		
How?		

Guidelines for the Group

1. **Have an open mind.** This is to be a positive learning experience. Someone's idea is not wrong just because it is different from your own.
2. **Keep confidential information confidential!** When someone makes a statement in a particular situation, this information is not to leave the group.

Guidelines for the Leader

1. **We have two ears and one mouth.** It is NOT the role of the leader to preach. Ideally the leader should speak the least. Silence is okay.
2. **Use good eye contact.** When someone is sharing, make eye contact. Really focus on listening; concentrate on what is being shared.
3. **Affirm one another and be upbeat.** Suggestions:
That's a good point.
That's cool.

I hadn't thought of that.
Right on!

Vary affirmation and be sincere.

4. **Use touch if appropriate.** Keep your group close when you're studying. Hold hands or put your arms around each other when you pray. Encourage hugs.
5. **Keep in touch with God!** Pray continually for the study and for each member of the group. Pray for the Holy Spirit to lead and to share the bigger picture.
6. **Use resources.** Use a Bible dictionary and other resources. There are people who are willing and able to help with any questions or difficulties.
7. **Use paper.** It may be helpful to write down questions, answers, and applications.
8. **Be unselfish.** Make sure it's the group that comes up with the neat ideas, cool thoughts, and awesome applications—not you! If they come up with something different from your original idea, GREAT! Don't make it fit you.
9. **Use their names.** It helps you get better acquainted, and they'll appreciate it.

Group Facilitation Suggestions

1. Remember these three needs for the group—prayer, sharing, and Bible study.
2. Have everyone introduce themselves.
3. Try an icebreaker, such as "What did you eat for breakfast?" or "What did you like most at breakfast?"
4. Use eye contact and actively listen. Pray that Jesus will be seen.
5. Encourage all members to participate and don't allow one person to dominate.
6. Everything said is confidential. Nothing leaves the group.
7. It will be helpful to encourage each group member to commit to at least 30 minutes of Bible study and prayer daily.
8. Always be positive and encouraging, developing relationships in a safe environment.
9. No idea or thought expressed is bad or dumb.
10. Pre-place the chairs in a full circle—no back row.
11. Always energetically affirm their answers.
12. Good silence is when the group is thinking or looking up answers.
13. Bad silence is when the group is restless or talking on the side.
14. No application should be made by the leader; take it from the group.
15. Let the group get the credit for the answers.
16. Facilitate, get others to participate; don't teach or preach.
17. When specific needs are mentioned or discussed, stop and pray right then.
18. Be very energetic with a nonresponsive group.
19. Never appear to take sides in an issue. Be neutral and don't get upset.

20. Deal with problems outside of group time.
21. Groups of more than 14 don't work well. The best group size is 4-12.
22. Call your members during the week.
23. With large groups, meet with your group leaders before the groups meet, to instruct, pray, and study. Meet afterward to support and affirm each other. (If Jesus could do one thing for you tonight, what would it be?) You may want to have the groups or group leaders pray for the needs of the person to their right.

Suggestions for Members of a Group Study

Joining a Bible study group can be a great avenue to spiritual growth. Here are a few guidelines that will help as you participate in studies:

1. These studies focus on a particular passage of Scripture. Only rarely should you refer to other portions of the Bible, and then only at the request of the leader. Of course, the Bible is internally consistent. Other good forms of study draw on that consistency, but inductive Bible study sticks with a single passage and works on it in depth.
2. These are discussion studies. Questions in these exercises aim at helping a group discuss a passage of Scripture in order to understand its content, meaning, and applications. Most people are either natural talkers or natural listeners. This type of study works best if people participate more or less evenly. Try to curb any natural tendency to either excessive talking or excessive quiet.
3. Most questions allow for a variety of answers. If you disagree with someone else's comment, gently say so. Then explain your own point of view from the passage before you.
4. Be willing to lead a discussion, if asked. Much of the preparation for leading has already been accomplished in the writing of the exercises.
5. Respect the privacy of people in your group. Many people speak of things within the context of a Bible study/prayer group that they do not want to be public knowledge. Assume that personal information spoken within the group setting is private, unless you are specifically told otherwise. Don't talk about it elsewhere.
6. We recommend that all groups follow a few basic guidelines and that these be read at the first session. You may wish to adapt them to your situation:
 - a. Anything said in this group is considered confidential and will not be discussed outside the group unless specific permission is given to do so.
 - b. We will provide time for each person present to talk if he or she feels comfortable doing so.
 - c. We will talk about ourselves and our own situations, avoiding conversation about other people.
 - d. We will listen attentively to each other.
 - e. We will pray for each other—in the group and afterward.
7. Enjoy your study. Prepare to grow.

Prayer Evangelism

Ministry through Prayer

I. Prayer is a vital part of a Christian's ministry (1 Timothy 2:1-4)

"Prayer is a necessity in our labor for the salvation of souls. God alone can give the increase of the seed we sow"(4T 528).

"Only the work accomplished with much prayer, and sanctified by the merit of Christ, will in the end prove to have been efficient for good"(DA 362).

NOTE: For the full impact of the preceding statement, study it in its context in the *Desire of Ages* chapter entitled "Come Rest Awhile."

II. Bible examples of prayer as a type of ministry

Jesus for Peter	Luke 22:31, 32
The church for Peter	Acts 12
Paul for his converts	Colossians 1:9-14
Paul's converts for him	2 Thessalonians 3:1, 2
Timothy for all men	1 Timothy 2:1-4
Jesus for all His followers	John 17:20, 21

Notice in particular the specific blessings Paul requested for the Colossian converts as indicated in Colossians 1:9-14. Compare KJV with one or more of the modern versions. On John 17:20-21, see 4T 529-530 for a comment that shows that in His garden prayer Jesus included all His children to the end of time.

III. Spirit of Prophecy examples or statements about prayer as a type of ministry

1. Church members for their ministers and leaders

"Happy is the minister who has a faithful Aaron and Hur to strengthen his hands when they become weary and to hold them up by faith and prayer. Such a support is a powerful aid to the servant of Christ in his work and will often make the cause of truth to triumph gloriously"(4T 531).

2. Pastors for their flock

"Following the example of Christ, he should intercede with God for the people of his care till he sees that his prayers are answered"(4T 267).

10 Things the Holy Spirit Does to Evangelize the Community through Prayer

1. Imparts compassion for the lost.
2. Brings repentance to the church and community.
3. Teaches us how to effectively reach our community.
4. Empowers Christians to witness.
5. Grants laborers for the harvest.
6. Guides our outreach.
7. Give means and resources.
8. Gives vitality and life to the church.
9. Brings unity.
10. Fills us with the love of God.

3. Church members for publishing houses, overseas work, etc.

"Sustain the publishing institution with your prayers and your means. Pray every morning and evening that it may receive God's richest blessings" (7T 182).

"All who could not personally engage in the work in mission lands would yet sustain it with their means, their sympathy, and their prayers" (SC 81 emphasis added).

4. Hospital workers (and others) for the sick

"When you neglect to pray for the sick, you deprive them of great blessings; for angels of God are waiting to minister to these souls in response to your petitions" (MR 195).

5. Workers for fellow laborers—2 Timothy 1-3

"Too often we forget that our fellow laborers are in need of strength and cheer. Take care to assure them of your interest and sympathy. Help the fellow-workers by your prayers, and let them know that you do it" (MH 492).

Family Worship

"O magnify the Lord with me; let us exalt His name together" (Psalms 34:3).

"I know of nothing that causes me so great sadness as a prayerless home. I do not feel safe in such a house for a single night; and were it not for the hope of helping the parents to realize their necessity and their sad neglect, I would not remain. The children show the result of this neglect, for the fear of God is not before them" (*Signs of the Times* August 7, 1884).

I. Benefits of family worship when rightly conducted and responsibility for conducting family worship

"Before leaving the house for labor, all the family should be called together, and the father, or the mother in the father's absence, should plead fervently with God to keep them through the day. Come in humility and with a heart full of tenderness and with a sense of the temptations and dangers before yourselves and your children; by faith bind them upon the altar, entreating for them the care of the Lord. Ministering angels will guard children who are thus dedicated to God" (1T 397-98). See also 7T 44.

II. How and when to schedule

"In every family there should be a fixed time for morning and evening worship. How appropriate it is for parents to gather their children about them before the fast is broken, to thank the heavenly Father for His protection during the night, and to ask Him for His help and guidance and watchcare during the day! How fitting, also when evening comes, for parents and children to gather once more before Him and thank Him for the blessings of the day that is past!" (7T 43).

"Family worship should not be governed by circumstances. You are not to pray occasionally, and when you have a large day's work, neglect it. In thus doing you lead your children to look upon prayer as of no special consequence" (ML 29).

"At an early hour of the evening, when we can pray unhurriedly and understandingly, we should present our supplications, and raise our voices in happy, grateful praise" (MYP 342).

III. Suggestions about how to conduct family worship

"The service should be short. When a long chapter is read and a long prayer offered, the service is made wearisome, and at its close a sense of relief is felt. God is dishonored when the hour of worship is made dry and irksome, when it is so tedious, so lacking in interest, that the children dread it" (7T 43).

"Fathers and mothers, make the hour of worship intensely interesting. There is no reason why this hour should not be the most pleasant and enjoyable of the day. A little thought given to preparation for it will enable you to make it full of interest and profit. From time to time let the service be varied. Questions may be asked on the portion of Scripture read, and a few earnest, timely remarks may be made. A song of praise may be sung. The prayer offered should be short and pointed. In simple, earnest words let the one who leads in prayer praise God for His goodness and ask Him for help. As circumstances permit, let the children join in the reading and the prayer" (UT 43).

"Let not those who kneel around the family altar put their faces in their hands close down to the chair when they address God. Let them lift up their heads and with holy awe speak to their heavenly Father, uttering their words in tones that can be heard" (6T 381).

Variety in Family Worship

"Your words were found and I ate them, and Your Word was to me the joy and rejoicing of my heart" (Jeremiah 15:16).

Most of the following suggestions were contributed by members of a summer "Ministry of Prayer" class during a class discussion.

1. **Use a modern speech version** and read one or more of the gospels through a few paragraphs or a chapter at a time. Have all who are old enough participate in the reading by changing readers every paragraph or two. The one leading out should ask questions that will spark discussion.
2. **Develop PowerPoint presentations to use occasionally.** Use digital photos or scan pictures of memories—family trips, a birthday, etc. You can also build programs around specific themes—the glory of the stars, for example—by searching the Internet for possibilities.
3. Occasionally have a **worship built around music**, using the varied skills of family members. One or more appropriate Bible and Spirit of Prophecy statements about song could be incorporated into the presentation. Some songs—"This Is My Father's World," for example—can be beautifully illustrated with color slides. If there is someone in the family who has taken digital pictures or color slides, a good Sabbath afternoon project could be to put together one or more illustrated songs that could then be used from time to time as the worship presentation.
4. In families where there are children ages 9-11, **prepare a worship notebook** as a Sabbath afternoon activity. Each page could contain a song, text, picture, story, or poem and, depending on the ages of the children, finger plays or other illustrative materials. Cover the completed pages with plastic. Then let children take turns choosing which page they want for worship.
5. With primary-age children, **collect leaves and press them.** Use spray paint to transfer leaf images to the pages of a notebook. Write a Bible promise within each leaf image. The notebook can be constructed as a Sabbath afternoon activity and then used periodically for worships.

As a variation, use snowflake patterns and write promises on them. Include Isaiah 1:18 and other statements having to do with personal salvation.
6. Occasionally **conduct a thanksgiving service.** Invite each person to mention one or more things they are thankful for. As a variation, invite a neighbor or other church members—especially new converts—to join you. Explain ahead of time to your guests what the worship will consist of and invite them to share.
7. Use **Bible story recordings** periodically. Provide opportunity for questions and discussion. Sometimes read a paragraph with an appropriate spiritual lesson from the Conflict of the Ages book that goes with the story.

Family Time

"Let the members of the family forget not, as they gather round the family altar, to pray for the men in positions of responsibility in God's work. The physicians in our sanitariums, the ministers of the gospel, those in charge of our publishing houses and schools, need your prayers. They are tempted and tried.

As you plead with God to bless them, your own hearts will be subdued and softened by His grace" HP 211 (R&H Jan. 28, 1904).

As a family, consider choosing an elementary school teacher, academy or college staff member, conference office staff member, literature evangelist or physician to include in your prayer list. Choose one this week and different ones in following weeks.

8. Use **the 10 volumes of *The Bible Story***, possibly using one book at a time and then going to something else for a while. When appropriate, select a song that goes with the story.
9. As a family, **memorize one Scripture passage** or statement per week. During one of the worships early in the week select a Scripture and take time for each person to copy it on a 3x5 card to carry until it is memorized. Review during the week, perhaps by an interesting question related to the passage. Periodically—perhaps at the end of a quarter—review all the memorized passages.
10. **Memorize a brief Ellen White statement** once or twice a week, and review these periodically. Here are some suggestions for a beginning:
 - a. "Our prayers should be more fervent; then they will be more effectual. Stronger and stronger should be our confidence that God's Spirit will be with us, making us pure and holy, as upright and fragrant as the cedars of Lebanon" (7T 251).
 - b. "Prayer is the key in the hand of faith to unlock heaven's storehouse, where are treasured the boundless resources of omnipotence" (SC 94-5).
 - c. "When you neglect to pray for the sick, you deprive them of great blessings, for angels of God are waiting to minister to these souls in response to your petitions" (MM 195).
 - d. "He is a lover of the beautiful, and above all that is outwardly attractive He loves beauty of character; He would have us cultivate purity and simplicity, the quiet graces of the flowers" (SC 85).
 - e. "The surrender of all our powers to God greatly simplifies the problem of life. It weakens and cuts short a thousand struggles with the passions of the natural heart" (MYP 30).
11. When your children are old enough to participate, develop a plan to **systematically read aloud the books in the *Conflict of the Ages*** set for evening worship. Each person should have his or her own copy of the selected book. The amount of time spent in reading can vary, but probably should not exceed 10 or 15 minutes on a weekday evening. Rotate the reading by changing readers every couple of paragraphs. Encourage each member to underline thoughts they especially want to remember.
12. When children are old enough to participate, **use the Testimonies for evening worship**. Develop a plan that will actively involve each member of the family. Here's one plan: Place a set of the Testimonies on a table in the living room. As the family gathers for worship, each person selects a book and reads silently until they find a statement they feel would be especially good to share. After a few minutes of silent reading, each person reads aloud the sentence or statement they have selected. As time permits, statements will often spark discussion.

A variation of this plan, good for Friday evening when there is more time for reading and discussion, is to select a topic such as prayer, Sabbath observance, etc., and have each person find a statement on that topic by using the index at the back of each volume.

"The hours of morning and evening worship should be the sweetest and most helpful of the day. Let it be understood that into these hours no troubled, unkind thoughts are to intrude; that parents and children assemble to meet with Jesus, and to invite into the home the presence of angels. Let the service be brief and full of life, adapted to the occasion, and varied from time to time. Let all join in the Bible reading, and learn and often repeat God's law. It will add to the interest of the children if they are sometimes permitted to select the reading. Question them upon it, and let them ask questions. Mention anything that will serve to illustrate its meaning. When the service is not thus made too lengthy, let the little ones take part in prayer, and let them join in song, if it be but a single verse" (Ed 186).

Teaching Children Good Devotional Habits

"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. A wonderful promise—Proverbs 22:6

"Only let the truth for this time be cordially received and become the basis of character, and it will produce steadfastness of purpose, which the allurements of pleasure, the fickleness of custom, the contempt of the world-loving, and the heart's own clamors for self-indulgence are powerless to influence" (5T 43).

NOTE: The above encouraging statement is from a message entitled "Parental Training" (5T 36-45). See the entire message for more practical counsel.

II. Establish the habit of family prayer

"In too many households prayer is neglected. Parents feel that they have no time for morning and evening worship. They cannot spare a few moments to be spent in thanksgiving to God for His abundant mercies—for the blessed sunshine and the showers of rain, which cause vegetation to flourish, and for the guardianship of holy angels. They have no time to offer prayer for divine help and guidance and for the abiding presence of Jesus in the household. They go forth to labor as the ox or the horse goes, without one thought of God or heaven. They have souls so precious that rather than permit them to be hopelessly lost, the Son of God gave His life to ransom them; but they have little more appreciation of His great goodness than have the beasts that perish" (PP 143).

"Like the patriarchs of old, those who profess to love God should erect an altar to the Lord wherever they pitch their tent. If ever there was a time when every house should be a house of prayer, it is now. Fathers and mothers should often lift up their hearts to God in humble supplication for themselves and their children. Let the father, as priest of the household, lay upon the altar of God the morning and evening sacrifice, while the wife and children unite in prayer and praise. In such a household Jesus will love to tarry" (PP 144).

III. Encourage personal devotional habits—Deuteronomy 6:4-7

The following is probably the most important child-training instruction given in Scripture: "And these words which I command you this day shall be upon your heart; and you shall teach them diligently to your children, and shall talk of them when you sit in your house, and when you walk by the way, and when you lie down, and when you rise" (Deuteronomy 6:6, 7).

This kind of teaching— "here a little and there a little" (1T 390)—makes religion a natural part of daily life. It creates an atmosphere in which good personal devotional habits are readily established. Note, in addition, the practical suggestions given below:

1. Remember that right pre-natal influences give children good spiritual qualities

"If before the birth of her child she is self-indulgent, if she is selfish, impatient, and exacting, these traits will be reflected in the disposition of the child...But if the mother unswervingly adheres to right principles, if she is temperate and self-denying, if she is kind, gentle, and unselfish, she may give her child these same precious traits of character" (MH 372-3).

2. Give the Holy Spirit opportunity, through you, to mold your little ones from their earliest moments

"Even the babe in its mother's arms may dwell as under the shadow of the Almighty through the faith of the praying mother. John the Baptist was filled with the Holy Spirit from his birth. If we live in communion with God, we too may expect the divine Spirit to mold our little ones, even from their earliest moments" (DA 512).

3. Expect little ones to develop an experience "in accordance with their years"

"Little children may be Christians, having an experience in accordance with their years. They need to be educated in spiritual things, and parents should give them every advantage" (DA 515).

"In working for the conversion of our children, we should not look for violent emotion as the essential evidence of conviction of sin. Nor is it necessary to know the exact time when they are converted. We should teach them to bring their sins to Jesus, asking His forgiveness, and believing that He pardons and receives them as He received the children when He was personally on Earth" (DA 515).

4. Clearly explain how a person becomes a Christian

"Parents should explain and simplify the plan of salvation to their children that their young minds may comprehend it. Children of eight, ten, or twelve years are old enough to be addressed on the subject of personal religion. Do not teach your children with reference to some future period when they shall be old enough to repent and believe the truth. If properly instructed, very young children may have correct views of their state as sinners and of the way of salvation through Christ" (1T 400).

5. Give your children an example of cheerfulness and gratitude

"Smile, parents; smile, teachers. If your heart is sad, let not your face reveal the fact. Let the sunshine from a loving, grateful heart light up the countenance. Unbend from your iron dignity, adapt yourselves to the children's needs, and make them love you. You must win their affection if you would impress religious truth upon their heart" (CG 148).

6. Encourage in your children the expression of love, gratitude, and thankfulness

"Encourage the expression of love toward God and toward one another...If we wish our children to possess the tender spirit of Jesus, and the sympathy angels manifest for us, we must encourage the generous, loving impulses of childhood" (DA 516).

"Parents, let the sunshine of love, cheerfulness, and happy contentment enter your own hearts; let its sweet, cheering influence pervade your home. Manifest a kindly, forbearing spirit; and encourage the same in your children, cultivating all the graces that will brighten the home life" (CC 146).

7. Use nature to help children develop a devotional spirit

"Teach the children to see Christ in nature. Take them out into the open air, under the noble trees, into the garden; and in all the wonderful works of creation teach them to see an expression of His love" (DA 516).

8. Make the Sabbath a day of delight

"Thus parents can make the Sabbath, as it should be, the most joyful day of the week. They can lead their children to regard it as a delight, the day of days, the holy of the Lord, honorable" (6T 359).

9. Show by your example that you find the Bible intensely interesting

"But if they would interest their sons and daughters in the word of God, they must be interested in it themselves" (PP 504).

10. Study the Bible with your children

"Parents, set apart a little time each day for the study of the Sabbath School lesson with your children...Let the more important passages of Scripture connected with the lesson be committed to memory, not as a task, but as a privilege. Though at first the memory be defective, it will gain strength by exercise, that after a time you will delight thus to treasure up the words of truth" (CC 512).

"Do not think that the Bible will become a tiresome book to the children. Under a wise instructor the Word will become more and more desirable. It will be to them as the bread of life; it will never grow old. There is in it a freshness and beauty that attract and charm the children and youth" (CG 514).

NOTE: Probably the worst enemy of Bible study is the TV. Experience has proven, again and again, that children can be brought up to love the Lord and His word much more successfully if there is no TV set in the home, and if they are kept so occupied with good things that they do not watch TV with the neighbors.

11. Keep family worship brief, interesting, and to the point

"In arousing and strengthening a love for Bible study, much depends on the use of the hour of worship. The hours of morning and evening worship should be the sweetest and most helpful of the day. Let it be understood that into these hours no troubled, unkind thoughts are to intrude; that parents and children assemble to meet with Jesus and to invite into the home the presence of holy angels. Let the services be brief and full of life, adapted to the occasion, and varied from time to time" (CG 522).

12. Encourage children to read the Bible on their own

"Let the youth be taught to love the study of the Bible. Let the first place in our thoughts and affections be given to the Book of books" (CG 513).

"Encourage the children and youth to seek out its treasures, both of thought and of expression" (CC 513).

"They should supply them with useful and interesting books, and should teach them to work, to have hours for physical labor, and hours to devote to study and reading" (UT 399).

13. Encourage personal prayer

"Let the youth follow His example in finding at dawn and twilight a quiet season for communion with their Father in heaven" (Ed 259).

In Preparing the Man and the Church— What We Should Pray For!

1. We are to ask for Christ again to be revealed in His fullness through the Holy Spirit's power (COL 121).
2. We are to plead for this "added power," addressing our petitions to the Lord of the harvest (AA 45, 55).
3. We are to pray for the "ripening of the harvest" and the promised seasons of refreshing (AA 35, 45).
4. We are to pray for multiplied thousands quickly to take their stand with us, as promised (GC 611- 612).
5. We are not to look for this vaguely, sometime in the future. We are to pray for and seek it now (R&H, March 19, 1985).
6. We are to ask God to prepare His saints to stand during the period of the seven last plagues when there is no intercessor (EW 65, 66).
7. We are to ask God to break the shackles that hold people back from accepting His liberating message of truth (*Ibid.* 271).
8. We are to ask God to lighten the earth with His glory, and for the blazing light to penetrate everywhere (R&H, November 29, 1892).
9. We are to ask for the coming of the blessed angel of Revelation 18 to give the added power and augmenting force to our message and for its fearless proclamation (EW 277).
10. We are to plead for a new revelation of Christ and His righteousness, a realizing sense of His personal presence and His enabling, energizing power, and the lightening of the earth with "the bright shining of the beams of His righteousness" (R&H, November 29, 1892). That involves a new emphasis, based on a new experience. And most of all, we are to pray first of all for a personal Pentecost, the conversion of the early rain, and then for genuine sanctification, the perfecting grace of the latter, lest we ourselves become castaways, and the responsibility for the souls of others lie at your door (TM 507, 508).

Hindrances to Receive the Latter Rain!

1. The heavenly refreshing will not come to those who are unready for it, because they have been wasting their time by giving attention to trifles (*R&H*, March 29, 1892).
2. The divine power and the great things of God will not be received so long as we are satisfied with small things" (*Ibid.*, November 15, 1892).
3. The operation of the Spirit will not come upon those who "do not appropriate the righteousness of Christ" (*Ibid.*, November 29, 1892; *Ev* 697).
4. It is impossible for men to be endowed with the Holy Spirit when they are set in their ideas and doctrinal views (*R&H*, March 19, 1895).
5. The outpouring of the Spirit without measure will not come upon the selfish and self-indulgent and those who fail to live up to the light that has been given to them. That is most vital. That involves known carelessness and personal indulgence (*Ibid.*, October 6, 1895).
6. The church will never be clothed with power until "envy, evil surmising, and evil-speaking" are put away (*Ibid.*, October 6, 1896).
7. We shall never be filled with the spirit so long as we rest "content with small blessings," and are "satisfied with a ripple on the surface" (*Ibid.*, June 10, 1902).
8. The Spirit will not fall upon us until our hearts are in unity with Christ and our lives in harmony with His work (*Ibid.*, June 30, 1903).
9. The showers of the latter rain will never refresh and invigorate the spiritually indolent and indifferent (*Ibid.*, May 17, 1906).
10. The power that lightens the earth with His glory will not move those who do not humble themselves before the Lord and open the door by confession and repentance or who think this work of the Spirit is something "dangerous" (*Bible Training School*, May 1907).
11. The Spirit will not be poured out so long as men are striving for highest honor, place, or position, as before Pentecost (*Signs of the Times*, February 17, 1914).

Power of the Latter Rain!

1. Pentecostal results will be repeated when the loud cry sounds forth, and there will be as many converted in a day as back at Pentecost (*R&H*, June 29, 1905).
2. Under the loud cry thousands will step out from the shadows into the light, surmounting all obstacles and breaking all ties that bind (*R&H*, July 23, 1895).
3. At that time many backsliders will return to the church as these wandering sheep again hear and heed the voice of the great shepherd (*6T* 401; *Ev* 694).
4. The light of God will penetrate and illuminate "every city and town," and the earth will then be "filled with the knowledge of salvation" (*R&H*, October 13, 1904; *Ev* 694).
5. Divine power will cooperate effectively with human effort (*R&H*, November 15, 1892).
6. Many, many of the inhabitants of earth will be brought to take their stand (*GC* 612).
7. The shackles that have bound a host of souls will be broken, and they will eagerly lay hold of truth (*EW* 271).
8. The study of the Bible will absorb the mind, and its truths will feast the soul (*R&H*, February 25, 1890).
9. The Lord's people will be sealed in their foreheads (*Ibid.*, June 10, 1902).
10. The saints will be prepared to stand through the seven last plagues (*EW* 86).
11. The seed, sown long ago and seemingly dormant, will spring up and bear its blessed fruit (*GC* 612).
12. Christ will again be revealed in His fullness, and His righteousness will be preeminent (*R&H*, November 29, 1892).
13. The message will be carried by conviction and the deep moving of the Spirit rather than by argument, logic, or form and force of words and by men qualified by the unction of the Spirit rather than by mere training in literary institutions (*GC* 606; *Ev* 699, 700).
14. A great many hesitant ministers, not of our faith, will be impelled to take their stand with us, and preach the truth for this time (*DA* 266; *Ev* 562, 563).

15. Even uneducated adults and children will be impelled to give this message from heaven, and multitudes will "receive the faith and join the armies of the Lord" (*R&H*, July 23, 1895; *Ev* 700).

An understanding of our true condition is imperative!

1. "I was shown that God's people are waiting for some change to take place—a compelling power to take hold of them. But they will be disappointed, for they are wrong. They must act: They must take hold of the work themselves, and earnestly cry to God for a true knowledge of themselves" (*1T* 261 emphasis added).
2. "The time is not far distant when the test will come to every soul. The mark of the beast will be urged upon us. Those who have step by step yielded to worldly demands, and conformed to worldly customs, will not find it a hard matter to yield to the powers that be, rather than subject themselves to derision, insult, threatened imprisonment, and death. The contest is between the commandments of God and the commandments of men. In this time, the gold will be separated from the dross in the church. True godliness will be clearly distinguished from appearance and tinsel of it. Many a star that we have admired for its brilliancy will then go out in darkness. Chaff like a cloud will be borne away on the wind, even from the place we see only floors of rich wheat. All who assume the ornaments of the sanctuary, but are not clothed with Christ's righteousness, will appear in the shame of their own nakedness" (*5T* 81 emphasis added).
3. Every individual must realize his own necessity. The heart must be emptied of "every defilement, and cleansed for the indwelling of the Spirit" (*TM* 507).
4. "Now is the time to prepare. The seal of God will never be placed upon the forehead of an impure man or woman. It will never be placed upon the forehead of the ambitious, world-loving man or woman. It will never be placed upon the forehead of men or women of false tongues or deceitful hearts. All who receive the seal must be without spot before God—candidates for Heaven" (*5T* 216).
5. "Wherefore, beloved, seeing that ye look for such things, be diligent that ye may be found of Him peace, without spot, and blameless" (2 Peter 3:14).
6. "Before honor is humility. To fill a high place before men, Heaven chooses the worker who, like John the Baptist, takes a lowly place before God. The most childlike disciple is the most efficient in labor for God. The heavenly intelligences can cooperate with him who is seeking, not to exalt self, but to save souls" (*DA* 436).
7. "When you return from doing missionary work, do not praise yourself, but exalt Jesus; lift up the cross of Calvary" (*5T* 596).

Power!

1. "At this very hour His Spirit and His grace are for all who need them and will take Him at His word" (*8T* 20 emphasis supplied).
2. "The promise of the Holy Spirit is not limited to any age or to any race" (*AA* 49).
3. "The Lord is more willing to give the Holy Spirit to those who serve Him than parents are to give good gifts to their children" (*AA* 50).
4. "The Holy Spirit will come to all who are begging for the bread of life to give to their neighbors" (*6T* 90).
5. "The Spirit awaits our demand and reception. Christ is again to be revealed in His fullness by the Holy Spirit's power" (*COL* 121).
6. "For the daily baptism of the Spirit, every worker should offer his petition to God" (*AA* 50).
7. "Let Christians put away all dissension and give themselves to God for the saving of the lost. Let them ask in faith for the promised blessing, and it will come" (*8T* 21).
8. "The disciples did not ask for a blessing for themselves. They were weighted with the burden of souls. The gospel was to be carried to the ends of the earth, and they claimed the endowment of power that Christ had promised. Then it was that the Holy Spirit was poured out, and thousands were converted in a day" (*Southern Watchman*, August 1, 1905).

9. "The presence of the Spirit with God's workers will give the proclamation of truth a power not all the honor or glory of the world could give" (AA 51).

—Compiled by Dr. Philip Willis

Resources

ABC's of Bible Prayer

by Glenn Coon

The principles of asking, believing, and claiming are illustrated in 12 sermons, liberally illustrated with case histories. Available from the Adventist Book Center at www.adventistbookcenter.com.

Christ's Way to Pray

by Philip Samaan

Christ's Way to Pray explains that the answer is not found in focusing on our own prayers or the prayers of others. The real answer is found in joining our weak prayers with Christ's mighty prayers. Available from AdventSource at www.adventsource.org or 800-328-0525.

Difference Is Prayer, The

by Ruthie Jacobsen

The author, the NAD prayer coordinator, offers ideas to help your church grow strong in prayer, Hebrew names for God to use in prayer, guidelines for prayer and fasting, the prayer coordinator's job description, plus more. Available from the Adventist Book Center at www.adventistbookcenter.com.

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THE LORD'S PRAYER

A MODEL FOR PRAYER

Focus upon God

- a. Hallowed be Your name
 - (1) Praise God for His character
 - (2) Praise God for His works
- b. Your kingdom come (acceptance of Christ as Savior and Lord)
 - (1) in my own life
 - (2) intercede for others
 - a. family
 - b. friends
 - c. church
 - d. country/world
- c. Your will be done
 - (1) lay out my plans before the Lord
 - (2) intercede for others

Present our needs

- d. Give us this day our daily bread
 - (1) present specific physical needs before the Lord
 - (2) claim His promises to provide
- e. Forgive us our debts
 - (1) confess specifics personal sins and sins of family
 - (2) claim His promises of forgiveness, cleansing and healing
- f. Deliver us from evil
 - (1) accept power from God through the anointing of the Holy Spirit
 - (2) put on the whole armor of God.

Focus upon God

- g. conclude by giving praise and glory to God
- h. trust in his abiding presence

Prayer

This Quick Start Guide is full of important information to help you start or revitalize a ministry in your church. This guide contains a job description, instructions for getting started, tips for maintaining a successful ministry, troubleshooting suggestions, recommended resources, and more. Whether you're new to this ministry or an experienced volunteer, this Quick Start Guide will inspire you with lots of great ideas you can immediately put to use in your local church.

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