

Prayer: The Heartbeat of Revival¹



SABBATH—JULY 6

READ FOR THIS WEEK'S LESSON: Acts 1:4, 8, 14; Mark 1:35; Luke 5:16; Matthew 18:19, 20; 2 Corinthians 10:3–5; Psalm 50:23.

MEMORY VERSE: “ ‘Even though you are evil, you know how to give good gifts to your children. How much more will your Father who is in heaven give good gifts to those who ask him!’ ” (Matthew 7:11, NlrV).

GOD MOVES POWERFULLY AS HIS PEOPLE PRAY. In the poem “Idylls² of the King: The Passing of Arthur” by the famous English poet Alfred Lord Tennyson, King Arthur says, “More things are wrought [done] by prayer / Than this world dreams of.” He is right. The great revivals³ throughout the Bible are filled with prayer. The Old Testament shows the prayers of the patriarchs⁴ and prophets (special messengers) as they pray for revival. Moses, David, and Daniel pray to God for power. The book of Acts shows New Testament believers on their knees, praying for the Holy Spirit to come.

Jesus’ prayer life shows that He always prayed to His heavenly Father for wisdom and strength. The Gospels give us examples of His spiritual power. It was on His knees alone with the Father that the Savior received His greatest strength.

“A revival need be expected only in answer to prayer.”—Ellen G. White, *Selected Messages*, book 1, page 121. During this week’s lesson, we will learn how prayer helped with some of the great revivals in the Bible.

1. revival—renewed interest in God and the desire to improve one’s spiritual life.

2. Idylls—simple poems about country life.

3. revivals—the act of turning people back to God.

4. patriarchs—famous Bible leaders, such as Noah, Abraham, Isaac, Jacob, et cetera.

SUNDAY—JULY 7**PRAYER AND REVIVAL IN ACTS
(Acts 1:4, 8, 14)**

The believers in Acts were filled with power from God. The Holy Spirit was poured out in wonderful ways. Hearts were touched, and lives were changed. The gospel reached the most difficult places. And thousands gave their lives to Christ. In Acts 2, three thousand people were added to the church (Acts 2:41). Acts 4:4 shows that the number of men alone who believed “was about five thousand.” Even many of the religious leaders, who were enemies of Jesus during His lifetime, became “obedient to the faith” (Acts 6:7). The story of this great growth continues in Acts 9, which says that churches “throughout Judea, Galilee, and Samaria enjoyed a time of peace” (Acts 9:31, NIV). By the time of Acts 10 to 12, the gospel had spread to many nations and people. The Roman centurion (military leader) and the treasurer of the queen of Ethiopia were baptized. Acts 1 says that about one hundred and twenty believers met in the upper room (Acts 1:13, 15). The best guess is that by the end of the first century, there were at least one million Christians in the Roman Empire. This is really amazing (wonderful) growth.

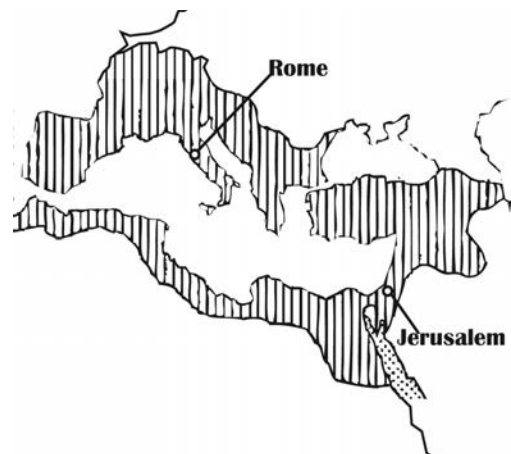
What was the secret? How did this happen?

According to Acts 1:4, 8, 14; Acts 2:42; Acts 4:31, 33; and Acts 6:3, 4, what was the big reason for

the growth of the New Testament church?

Pastor R. A. Torrey was a powerful revival preacher in the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries. He held revival meetings in Great Britain from 1903–1905 and throughout North America in 1906 and 1907. He complained about the busyness of Christians. He said, “We are too busy to pray, and so we are too busy to have power. We have a lot of action, but we have done little. We have many services but few changed souls; many machines but few results” (adapted).

Are you too busy to pray? Everyone can understand that! How can you slow down enough to take the time you need to pray? Think about all the excuses that you have to put it off. Think of the reasons that you give to do other things. What is it that you are losing by not spending time in prayer?



By the end of the first century, there were at least one million Christians in the Roman Empire.

MONDAY—JULY 8**JESUS' PRAYER LIFE (Luke 5:16)**

Compare⁵ the following verses: Mark 1:35; Luke 5:16; and Luke 9:18. What three special things do these verses show about Jesus' prayer life?

“Christ was continually receiving from the Father that He might communicate to us. He said, ‘The word which ye [you] hear is not mine but the Father’s which sent me.’ ‘The Son of Man came not to be ministered unto [helped], but to minister [serve].’ Jesus did this not for Himself, but for others. He lived and thought and prayed. From hours spent with God He came forth morning by morning, to bring the light of heaven to men. Daily Jesus received a fresh baptism of the Holy Spirit. In the early hours of the new day the Lord would awaken Jesus from His sleep. His soul and His words were filled with grace⁶ so that He might share them with others.”—Adapted from Ellen G. White, *The Review and Herald*, August 11, 1910.

Study John 17:20–24; Luke 22:31, 32; and Matthew 26:36–44. What things does Jesus pray for? How do His prayers show His most important concerns? What is the most important part of each of His prayers?

Prayer was a very important part of Jesus' life. It was His lifeline to the Father. Every day Jesus renewed His relationship with His Father through prayer. Jesus' prayer life gave Him the courage and strength to face the temptations of the enemy. It gave Him spiritual freshness and power. So He came from these times of prayer determined to do the Father's will. Luke describes one of Jesus' times of prayer. He says, “As he [Jesus] was praying, the appearance of his face changed. His clothes became as bright as a flash of lightning” (Luke 9:29, NIV). Jesus felt refreshed and renewed with the Father each day by praying.

Spend a few moments thinking about several times that God powerfully answered your prayers. How can remembering these experiences deepen your prayer life today?



Prayer gave Jesus the strength to face the temptations of the enemy.

5. compare—to show how two or more things are the same or different.

6. grace—God's gift of mercy and forgiveness that He freely gives us to take away our sins.

TUESDAY—JULY 9**PRAYING TOGETHER**
(Matthew 18:19, 20)

Jesus often spent time alone in prayer. But there were many times when He encouraged His closest disciples (followers) to pray with Him. For example, Peter, James, and John went with Jesus to the mount of transfiguration⁷ (Matthew 17:1, 2). And Jesus encouraged them to unite (join) with Him in praying in Gethsemane (Luke 22:39–46). He did this because there is unusual power in united (joined together as one) prayer.

Carefully study Matthew 18:19, 20. Write a short note about what Jesus said about united prayer.

“The promise is made with the understanding that several of God’s people pray together. In answer to these prayers, there may be expected a greater power than the power which comes in answer to private prayer. The power given depends on the unity of the members and their love for God and for one another.”—Adapted from Ellen G. White, *The Central Advance*, February 25, 1903.

John Bunyan once said, “You can do more than pray after you have prayed. But you cannot do more than pray until you have prayed.”

As we enter into earnest and heart-

felt prayer, the Holy Spirit powerfully works in miraculous ways through our united prayers.

Read Acts 12:1–16. What was Peter’s situation here? What was the attitude (feeling) of the church? What do these verses tell us about the power of united prayer?

There is no question that Peter’s escape was a miracle. It was so great that Peter was not even sure it was real, and that he was not in a vision. Only later did Peter realize what had happened. It also is important to understand in verses 5 and 12 that people were praying together. Remember how Peter was well guarded? The fact that so many people were praying for him should make the real miracle of his escape come as no surprise. There is no question that we should do the same—pray together—especially when we also face challenges (problems) as a group.



There is unusual power in praying together.

7. mount of transfiguration—the mountain where Jesus’ body shone in glory before Peter, James, and John, and Moses and Elijah appeared with Him. Read Matthew 17:1–8.

WEDNESDAY—JULY 10

OUR FREEDOM
(2 Corinthians 10:3–5)

Have you ever wondered why prayer is so important? Why do we have to ask God for the Holy Spirit? Does He not want to give the Holy Spirit to us?

The answer to these questions depends on how we understand God's respect for our freedom of choice. God has created us with the ability to choose between right and wrong. God is doing everything He can for us. And He works through us before we pray. But He is limited by our choices (Psalm 78:41, 42).

In prayer we freely admit that we depend fully upon God. And we admit that we give Him the freedom to act in our lives. The more we pray, the more we come to realize that God's power is enough. When we pray, His Holy Spirit prepares our hearts to receive more of Him. The more we pray, the more we let the Holy Spirit "crucify [put to death]" our sinful desires. In the great controversy (war) between good and evil, prayer helps God to work more powerfully in our lives.

Study 2 Corinthians 10:3–5. How do you explain the following sentences: "The weapons I [Paul] fight with are not the weapons the world uses. In fact, it is just the opposite. My weapons have the power of God to destroy the camps of the enemy" (NirV)? What are these

weapons? What kind of war is Paul talking about here? Why does he use this kind of symbol? How do we understand this kind of battle?

As Seventh-day Adventists, we understand that the war between Christ and Satan is real. We know that we all are involved in it. If we were left alone, we would be helpless and hopeless against Satan. Our only hope is our connection with Jesus. A very important part of that connection is our prayer life. This is a spiritual weapon for a spiritual battle. This is the weapon that we should always have. If Jesus needed to pray, then we need to pray so much more.

"We, too, must have times set apart for meditation⁸ and prayer and for receiving spiritual refreshing. We do not value the working power of prayer as we should. Prayer and faith will do what no power on earth can do."—Adapted from Ellen G. White, *The Ministry [Work Done for God] of Healing*, page 509.



Prayer and faith will do what no power on earth can do.

8. meditation—a quiet time spent thinking and praying about spiritual matters.

How in your own life have you experienced the realness of the war between Christ and Satan? How has prayer helped you in this war? Where would you be without prayer?

THURSDAY—JULY 11

PRAYER THAT WORKS (Psalm 34:1)

There are many good ways to pray. Some people have found it helpful to kneel before God with their Bibles open. Then they read a few verses and talk with God about what they are reading.

The Psalms make good subject matter for prayer. Try thinking about a special psalm during your prayer times. Take one verse at a time. Read it aloud. Then talk to God about what the verse is saying to you.

Others have found that their most meaningful prayer times are alone with God in some quiet place. Still others have joined prayer with singing.

Read Psalm 34:1; Psalm 50:23; Psalm 67:3; and Psalm 71:6. What do we learn here about how well prayer works?

David's prayers were filled with adoration (deep love) or praise. When we think deeply about God's goodness and love, our hearts overflow with praise.

What kind of prayer is found in Daniel 9:8–13?

In Ephesians 5:20, what does Paul add to make a good prayer life?

What is the meaning of prayer in Ephesians 6:18 and Philippians 4:6? Why is this an important part of prayer?

We do not want to tell anyone what to say in prayer. But this could be a rough outline of how to pray: we start with praise and worship. We thank God for His goodness to us. We then confess our faults and weaknesses. Then we thank God for His forgiveness. We end by telling God of our needs. At the same time, we need to tell Him of these needs with a humble attitude (feeling) of surrender to God and trust in His power.

Has your prayer life not been what it should or could be? What do you need to do differently? Why not try to spend more time in prayer? It can change your life.

FRIDAY—JULY 12

ADDITIONAL STUDY: "Share your wants, your joys, your sorrows, your cares, and your fears with God. You cannot make Him feel tired. God, who can number the hairs of your head, is not uncaring about the

wants of His children. 'The Lord is full of tender mercy and loving concern.' James 5:11, NIV. His heart of love is touched by our sorrows and even by how we pray about them. Take to Him everything that puzzles the mind. Nothing is too big for Him. This is because He holds up worlds. He rules over all the affairs of the universe. Nothing that bothers 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 problem too difficult for Him to solve. No trouble that happens to the weakest of His children is too small for Him to notice. No worry can bother the soul that He does not care about. No joy can cheer, no sincere prayer can escape the lips, which our heavenly Father has not noticed. Neither has He failed to take serious interest. 'He heals those who have broken hearts. He takes care of their wounds.' Psalm 147:3, NIV. The connection between God and each soul is clear and full as if there were not another person upon the earth to share His watch care. It also is as if there were not another soul for whom He gave His beloved Son."—Adapted from Ellen

G. White, *Steps to Christ*, page 100.

DISCUSSION QUESTIONS:

- ❶ Why do we need to pray if God knows everything? Many answers can be given. But perhaps the most important one is that we have been told often in the Bible to pray. Even if we do not understand how prayer works, those who get results know that prayer does work. What other reasons can you give to explain why prayer is important?
- ❷ Prayerfully read over the Ellen G. White statement found in Friday's Additional Study. Look at all the encouragement that is found there, especially in the last line that explains the connection between God and the person who prays. What can you do and what choices can you make, to enter into the kind of close connection with the Lord that is described here?
- ❸ In class, talk about how real the war between Christ and Satan is. Also explain how it is being shown in your own church. Talk about how praying together can help you all work through whatever challenges (problems) you are facing.