

HEALTH SABBATH

**NOW  MORE THAN EVER**

**JULY 25, 2020**



**Sabbath School  
Feature Presentation**



HEALTH MINISTRIES

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Seventh-day Adventist Church  
NORTH AMERICAN DIVISION






## Introduction

This quarter's Adult Sabbath School study guide is on the topic of "Making Friends for God: The Joy of Sharing in His Mission," and the focus for the week is on "Prayer Power: Interceding for Others."

The following Special Feature is provided as a guide to be used in conjunction with the North American Division's Health Sabbath on July 25, 2020. We prayerfully hope that this resource will prove a blessing for your church family as you discuss how to be an effective ambassador of the heavenly kingdom. NOW, MORE THAN EVER, our neighbors, communities, and fellow church members are in need of our commitment to a ministry of "sharing hope and wholeness through the healing power of Christ."

## Memory Text in Context

Read this week's memory text along with the verses in context. A few translations are provided here:

-  Confess your trespasses to one another, and pray for one another, that you may be healed. The effective, fervent prayer of a righteous man avails much. Elijah was a man with a nature like ours, and he prayed earnestly that it would not rain; and it did not rain on the land for three years and six months. And he prayed again, and the heaven gave rain, and the earth produced its fruit. James 5:16-18, *NKJV*.
  
-  Make this your common practice: Confess your sins to each other and pray for each other so that you can live together whole and healed. The prayer of a person living right with God is something powerful to be reckoned with. Elijah, for instance, human just like us, prayed hard that it wouldn't rain, and it didn't—not a drop for three and a half years. Then he prayed that it would rain, and it did. The showers came and everything started growing again. James 5:16-18, *The Message*.
  
-  Therefore confess your sins to each other and pray for each other so that you may be healed. The prayer of a righteous person is powerful and effective. Elijah was a human being, even as we are. He prayed



earnestly that it would not rain, and it did not rain on the land for three and a half years. Again he prayed, and the heavens gave rain, and the earth produced its crops. James 5:16-18, *NIV*.

## Consider

Consider the various issues that James brings up in these verses.

### **Issue 1: What sins are addressed in verse 16?**

Read this passage from *Counsels to the Church*, page 304:

The Scripture bids us, "Confess your faults one to another, and pray one for another, that ye may be healed." James 5:16. To the one asking for prayer, let thoughts like these be presented: "We cannot read the heart, or know the secrets of your life. These are known only to yourself and to God. If you repent of your sins, it is your duty to make confession of them." Sin of a private character is to be confessed to Christ, the only mediator between God and man. For "if any man sin, we have an advocate with the Father, Jesus Christ the righteous." 1 John 2:1. Every sin is an offense against God and is to be confessed to Him through Christ. Every open sin should be as openly confessed. Wrong done to a fellow being should be made right with the one who has been offended. If any who are seeking health have been guilty of evilspeaking, if they have sowed discord in the home, the neighborhood, or the church, and have stirred up alienation and dissension, if by any wrong practice they have led others into sin, these things should be confessed before God and before those who have been offended.

It seems that James is addressing individual sins – whether done privately or openly. They are to be confessed according to how the sin was committed and to those who were affected. It takes humility and God's promptings to do this. Sometimes we're not aware of the fact that we offended or hurt someone. But oftentimes we know that there is "bad blood" between us and another person. Are we willing to allow healing to enter into our lives, and into theirs, by confessing our faults to each other?



## Issue 2: What sins are addressed in verses 17-18?

The story of Elijah in 1 Kings, chapters 17 and 18, is richly bathed in prayer. Elijah had a very difficult task – that of addressing the sins of a nation, and it seems that he understood the power of prayer to meet this need.

Read this passage from *Prophets and Kings*, page 119.

Among the mountains of Gilead, east of the Jordan, there dwelt in the days of Ahab a man of faith and prayer whose fearless ministry was destined to check the rapid spread of apostasy in Israel. Far removed from any city of renown, and occupying no high station in life, Elijah the Tishbite nevertheless entered upon his mission confident in God's purpose to prepare the way before him and to give him abundant success. The word of faith and power was upon his lips, and his whole life was devoted to the work of reform. His was the voice of one crying in the wilderness to rebuke sin and press back the tide of evil. And while he came to the people as a reprover of sin, his message offered the balm of Gilead to the sin-sick souls of all who desired to be healed.

James 5 brings to our attention the great need for prayer – prayer for ourselves as individuals and prayers for us collectively as a nation. And the focus of these prayers and efforts on the part of God's appointed messengers is to bring healing and wholeness.

## Connect

There is a connection between confession, praying with others, praying for others, and healing. It's at the heart of 12-step recovery programs like the Adventist Church's [Journey to Wholeness](#) program (see [www.NADhealth.org/recovery](http://www.NADhealth.org/recovery) for more information).

The story of Elijah takes it another step further by demonstrating that an entire land can be healed by earnest confession and seeking after God.

How do these relate to our world today? Are nations in need of healing? What about our own nation? What about our own church? And what about you individually?



During the time of the Civil War in the United States, the Adventist Church was just becoming an organized denomination. As the war continued to rage, with no end in sight, the US government called for a national day of fasting.

Ellen White was given a special message at this time, as recorded in *Testimonies to the Church*, volume 1, page 253-268. Portions of it read as follows:

The North have had no just idea of the strength of the accursed system of slavery. It is this, and this alone, which lies at the foundation of the war... Thousands have been induced to enlist with the understanding that this war was to exterminate slavery; but now that they are fixed, they find that they have been deceived, that the object of this war is not to abolish slavery, but to preserve it as it is.

Those who have ventured to leave their homes and sacrifice their lives to exterminate slavery are dissatisfied. They see no good results from the war, only the preservation of the Union, and for this thousands of lives must be sacrificed and homes made desolate. Great numbers have wasted away and expired in hospitals; others have been taken prisoners by the rebels, a fate more to be dreaded than death. In view of all this, they inquire: If we succeed in quelling this rebellion, what has been gained? They can only answer discouragingly: Nothing. That which caused the rebellion is not removed. The system of slavery, which has ruined our nation, is left to live and stir up another rebellion...

The prospects before our nation are discouraging, for there are those filling responsible stations who are rebels at heart...A great share of the volunteers enlisted fully believing that the result of the war would be to abolish slavery. Others enlisted intending to be very careful to keep slavery just as it is, but to put down the rebellion and preserve the Union. And then to make the matter still more perplexing and uncertain, some of the officers in command are strong proslavery men whose sympathies are all with the South, yet who are opposed to a separate government...our armies have been repulsed and unmercifully slaughtered on account of the management of these proslavery men.

In this state of things, proclamations are issued for national fasts, for prayer that God will bring this war to a speedy and favorable termination. I was then directed to Isaiah 58:5-7:



📖 “Is it such a fast that I have chosen? a day for a man to afflict his soul? is it to bow down his head as a bulrush, and to spread sackcloth and ashes under him? wilt thou call this a fast, and an acceptable day to the Lord? Is not this the fast that I have chosen? to loose the bands of wickedness, to undo the heavy burdens, and to let the oppressed go free, and that ye break every yoke? Is it not to deal thy bread to the hungry, and that thou bring the poor that are cast out to thy house? when thou seest the naked, that thou cover him; and that thou hide not thyself from thine own flesh?”

I saw that these national fasts were an insult to Jehovah...When our nation observes the fast which God has chosen, then will He accept their prayers as far as the war is concerned; but now they enter not into His ear. He turns from them, they are disgusting to Him.

This was written in early 1862, several months after the Civil War started. Notice that the nation was under control of individuals with unconsecrated motives. But it was not limited to those in positions of responsibility. Men who had enlisted in the war also shared the proslavery sentiments, although they were fighting to preserve the Union.

All through the nation, men and women were bent on preserving a system of oppression and bondage. And death and destruction were the fruits of their unconsecrated hearts.

## Consecrate

Highlighting Isaiah 58 is key to understanding the call to our church today. What are the lessons that we can learn and apply to the current civil unrest? Who are the ones who are bound by wickedness, carrying heavy burdens, and oppressed? Who are the hungry, poor, and naked? The Seventh-day Adventist Church was active in speaking and writing against slavery during the Civil War. Church members were encouraged to be clear that they had no sympathy with slavery. Shouldn't we plead on behalf of those who are being oppressed today?

Let these words by Ellen White touch your heart today:



I was shown that the people of God should be closely united in the bonds of Christian fellowship and love. God alone can be our shield and strength in this time of our national calamities. The people of God should awake. Their opportunities to spread the truth should be improved, for they will not last long. I was shown distress and perplexity and famine in the land. Satan is now seeking to hold God's people in a state of inactivity, to keep them from acting their part in spreading the truth, that they may at last be weighed in the balance and found wanting...There is no help for us but in God; in this state of earth's confusion we can be composed, strong, or safe, only in the strength of living faith; nor can we be at peace, only as we rest in God and wait for His salvation. (*Testimonies to the Church*, volume 1, p 260-262.)

## Closing Prayer

Our Father, we come before you now with much fear, anxiety, and dread about all that is happening around us. Disease, death, and dismay are on every hand. But at this moment, we want to turn our gaze towards You, seated high upon a throne, and yet desiring to be enthroned within our hearts. You long for us to find in You a refuge in time of trouble. But we need to acknowledge that our hearts are not completely right with You yet. We, too, have treated others with contempt. We have looked at those who are different from us as of a lower value. Our hearts have despised the very ones for whom Christ suffered and died. So in our weakness we offer this prayer: "Lord, take my heart; for I cannot give it. It is Thy property. Keep it pure, for I cannot keep it for Thee. Save me in spite of myself, my weak, unchristlike self. Mold me, fashion me, raise me into a pure and holy atmosphere, where the rich current of Thy love can flow through my soul," (*COL*, 159). Give us a heart that longs to bring others to freedom. Then your gospel will be proclaimed in power, and You will come to set all wrongs right. And we will rejoice at last, when we see You – face to face. In Christ's name, we pray. Amen.