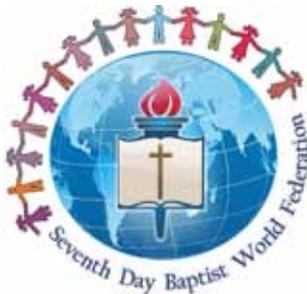


**PRAY,
or Be Prey**



Seventh Day Baptist Week of Prayer

January 1-7, 2017

Sponsored by the
Seventh Day Baptist World Federation
Meet us at: www.sdbwf.org

During the first full week of January since 1967, Seventh Day Baptists around the world unite in prayer, sharing meditations centered on a theme chosen by the author. This year's theme is "Pray, or Be Prey."

Purposes of the SDB World Federation include:

1. **To provide increased communication** among Seventh Day Baptist groups around the world.
2. **To promote projects of mutual interest** which will benefit from international cooperation.
3. **To stimulate fellowship** among Seventh Day Baptist Christians through periodic meetings of representatives between Conferences or groups and programs of mutual aid.
4. **To receive and evaluate statements of need** as may come to the Federation and to share such expression of need with its members, inviting their response as the Lord may lead.

Contributions: The Federation delegates recommend that all member Conferences designate an offering at least once a year for the World Federation, and also that all member Conferences consider designating ten percent of their annual budgets for the Federation. Contributions may be sent to the Treasurer, Mr. Gavin Fox, PO Box 7755, Silver Spring, MD 20907 USA or via PayPal at treasurer@sdbwf.org

Sessions: The last General Session was held in the United States (Carthage College in Kenosha, Wisconsin), July 28–August 1, 2008. During 2011 an Executive Committee Meeting of SDB World Federation was held August 7-13 at Camp Wakonda, Milton, Wisconsin. The next General Session is planned to occur in Brazil, January 22-28, 2017.

Officers for the World Federation include General Secretary Andrew Samuels (general.secretary@sdbwf.org); President Dale Thorngate (president@sdbwf.org); Treasurer Gavin Fox (treasurer@sdbwf.org); Assistant General Secretary C. Justin Camenga; Recording Secretary Karen Umana, and Vice Presidents Marlo Siolo (Australia/New Zealand), Claudia Ferguson (Caribbean), Jonas Sommer (South America), and Al Paypa (Asia).

About the Author, *continued*

One of her more recent callings has been to serve as the church's program secretary. She also served as recording secretary for the Eastern Association of SDB Churches in the USA & Canada in 2010. She's been serving as a secretary for more than four years while always helping as a children's ministry teacher, and youth ministry teacher. With the aid of her faithful helper, Keila Velasquez, she also serves the music ministry by projecting the music slides in the worship services.

Karen thanks the Lord for the opportunities He has given her. She cannot imagine not serving God or her church with the skills He has provided. She is thrilled to be able to share in the wider community of God's kingdom by serving as the Recording Secretary for the Seventh Day Baptist World Federation, a job she has been doing for three years.

It's Our Choice: Pray or Be Prey

Scripture: Ephesians 1:4, 1 Thessalonians 5:17,
1 Peter 1:15-16, Leviticus 20:7-8, Hebrews 12:14

We are saints. Just ask the men and women we've looked at over the past week. We are saints. That word holds a lot of meaning. We are held responsible for our core belief: that Jesus Christ died for our sins and gave us salvation and everlasting life.

Saints cannot be holy on their own. To be a saint or to be holy is a standing given by God and God only. A Christian that stands still is only going backwards. There is no middle ground. With God we are either going forward or backwards.

Saints remain active by reading Scripture, teaching, praying, and worshipping. In those ways, we must remain active.

When you love someone you are active in their life. God asks for the same. If we love Him, we must remain in constant prayer.

I have a small 12-pound dog whose name is April. Once, I told the students in my youth class, "April is important to me. And because she is so important to me and I love her, she is in every life decision that I make." And all she is, is a 12-pound furry ball of love. If God is much more important to me, I will keep Him in every decision that I make. I will keep in constant communication with the maker of the heavens and the earth, whether I'm going through good times or bad times, just as David did.

Reflection: We are blessed to be chosen to worship a living God.

Prayer:

Lord, give me strength to remain holy, and to represent You and my Christian family wherever I may go.

Pray for Seventh Day Baptists in South Africa, Uganda, USA & Canada, and Zambia.

About the Author



Karen Umaña was born in El Salvador, Central America, on April 21, 1979. Her grandparents, along with her 11 aunts and uncles, raised her and her brother. Then her parents, after being able to save up enough, took them to California (United States) in 1985.

She accepted Jesus Christ as her Lord and Savior at the age of 13 and got baptized. At that time she felt the music ministry was her calling, and so she worshiped God with her voice for many years.

In 1993 her family moved to Maryland and she continued in the worship ministry in the new church they attended. After graduating high school, she started working with her Dad in their family business and she has worked as an office manager for the past 17 years building her management and bilingual skills. Sometimes, she translates from Spanish for the English-speaking members of the church, and the visitors who need that service.

In her mid-20s she started attending the women's ministry meetings of her church, and loved it. God then called her to serve as the women's ministry president for two years. When the church joined the Seventh Day Baptist Denomination, she learned about many different ministries and events. She was blessed to meet Bethany Chroniger and become good friends with her. Together, they attended the North American Baptist Women's Union and got the opportunity to attend the Baptist World Alliance meeting in Hawaii in 2010. Karen has also attended "The Women of Faith" events for the past four years. She's learned to love being a woman and learning about a woman's identity and role in Christ.

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Sunday — January 1, 2017

It's Our Choice: Pray or Be Prey

Scripture: 1 John 5:5, Galatians 3:22, James 1:6,
John 11:40, Psalm 119:30

Abraham, Moses, Samuel, and David. When I ponder the stories of these great men, two things come to mind: their constant communication with God, and their refusal to be the enemy's prey.

We are part of Abraham's spiritual lineage that connects us through the blood of Jesus Christ. Abraham's faith is unsurpassed, and as the "Father of Faith" he taught us that prayer builds faith.

When I was a little girl, my father was like a "superman." I had a certainty that when he was around I was safe and worry-free. As I grew up, that dynamic changed. He was no longer superman, but some old man that didn't let me do anything or have any fun. In my teens he was boring, had no idea what he was talking about, and I thought I knew more than he did.

As I grew older, I started realizing that my father's warnings came from experience, failures and love. Now that I am in my 30s, I secretly pay attention to his advice and ponder on his words. He is no superman; better than that, he is a man of God doing his best.

Abraham was just that—a man of God doing his best, and to God be the glory. That is all He asks us to be. We are all given different attributes that we must use in our Christian walk, so that those around us and those who will somehow hear about us and our story will be helped in their spiritual walk.

Abraham is known as the "Father of Faith." What imprint do you want to leave in the story of your Christian life for the believers that will one day hear of you?

Reflection: Am I a positive building block for others? Or am I part of the reason why others fall prey to the enemy?

Prayer:

Lord, when my faith is lacking, please remind me of the tribulations that those before me have overcome, and help me pray without ceasing in my joy and sadness.

Pray for Seventh Day Baptists in Australia, Brazil, and Burundi.

Friday, January 6, 2017

It's Our Choice: Pray or Be Prey

Scripture: 1 John 5:14, Ephesians 6:18,
James 5:13, Colossians 4:2

I have a dear friend who I don't get to see very often. No matter how much time has gone by, when we get to see each other it's like time stood still and we didn't miss a beat. Once the excitement passes however, we realize how much of each other's lives we've missed. With God it's the same. Sometimes we turn away from Him and many things happen in our lives that we say "Why me?" or "What did I do?" And when we finally find our way back, He is there to listen and hear our prayer.

The problem is that we are called to remain in God just as David and Moses did, so that we don't become prey for the enemy to feed on. I no longer wonder how Abraham, Moses, or David got through it because I've come to understand it was their constant communication with God. Abraham was visited by God and given the promise of innumerable descendants, and Moses was God's friend. Can you imagine being God's friend? David would get so lost and excited in worship that he got naked.

When we have friends and we love them, we keep in constant communication. And I don't mean hide in your house and just pray and never come out. God wants our lives to revolve around Him because He is the giver of all.

Reflection: When our lives are in constant communication with God, we are no longer prey to the enemy.

Prayer:

Jesus help us understand the importance of speaking with You daily.

Pray for Seventh Day Baptists in The Philippines, Poland, and Rwanda.

Thursday, January 5, 2017

It's Our Choice: Pray or Be Prey

Scripture: Matthew 26:41, 1 Corinthians 16:13,
Psalm 119:98, Isaiah 40:29-31

Just as a lion stalks his prey, we are sought after by our enemy, through our weaknesses. Just as the great David had his weaknesses, we also all have our very own. And because David knew his weakness, he relied on God's strength, forgiveness, and guidance through worship and prayer.

As a child, I used to get bad grades in school, and my brother got good grades. When our report cards came, I used to beg him not to show our parents. But he wasn't too easily manipulated until I would start crying. I knew his weakness. With my mom, if I wanted something, I knew I had to volunteer to do a chore here and there to get what I wanted. With my Dad, I just had to call him "Daddy," instead of the normal "Dad."

Our weaknesses change us, and sometimes our weaknesses make us who we are. If we have a weakness for a person, or food, or drugs, alcohol, gambling, etc., these things can rule our lives and distort our perspective, until that weakness becomes our reason for living. The more we give in to the weakness, the farther away from God we become. God tells us to bring it all to Him; He will deal with it and it will be His problem and not ours. But we must bring it to Him.

David committed a sin with Bathsheba, and he was blinded by his weakness. Even when Nathan was describing it to him, David was still blind to what he had done until the prophet directly told him, and David realized what he had done. There was no way to undo his actions. What was done was done. All he could do was repent.

Reflection: God wants us to realize where we are headed when falling prey to our weaknesses, before what is done is done.

Prayer:

Lord, let me recognize where I may fail the most, and bring to you the weakness in me that I cannot change on my own.

Pray for Seventh Day Baptists in New Zealand, Nicaragua, and Nigeria.

Monday — January 2, 2017

It's Our Choice: Pray or Be Prey

Scripture: Ephesians 4:2, James 4:10,
James 3:13, Matthew 11:29-30

The Word of God says, "Now Moses was a very humble man, more humble than anyone else on the face of the earth" (Numbers 12:3).

Most of us aren't born humble, but as Christians we are called to be humble. I personally believe that humility is a physically challenging attribute and not just mental or emotional. I will explain why.

When being told what to do by someone in higher authority, I may say "I understand" or "Yes" — but my face, gestures and reactions may say or do otherwise.

As Christians we learn that we have no power over anyone or anything but ourselves. Moses was "more humble than anyone else on the face of the earth." After God had already given Moses and Aaron instructions to speak over the rock (with God providing water for the people), Moses decided to strike the rock twice instead. Because of this action Moses was no longer going to enter the Promised Land (Numbers 20:8-12). He acted differently from what his authority had instructed.

In our church youth class this year we read about Moses from the beginning of his life to the very end. One thing that stuck with us was how much Moses put up with, and how many times poor Moses asked God to take his life. Because Moses was so humble, he understood that leading the people of Israel was bigger than he was, and even bigger than the people he was leading. I think sometimes we forget that God is so much bigger than our problems, bigger than our family, and bigger than our church. When we finally realize this we will be humble, and one day we will get to the Promised Land.

Reflection: At the end of every day, reflect on your actions, your words, and your thoughts, and ask yourself, "Was I humble today?"

Prayer:

Jesus, let me be humble just as You taught us to be. You left us so many men and women as examples, but the ultimate one is You. Please guide me.

Pray for Seventh Day Baptists in Chile, England, and Guyana.

Tuesday — January 3, 2017

It's Our Choice: Pray or Be Prey

Scripture: Galatians 5:13, Mark 10:45,
1 Peter 4:10, Romans 12:9-13

We are all called to be servants. Hannah (in 1 Samuel 1) gave her son to serve God.

The story of Samuel is one of my favorites in the Bible. When I read it, it's hard to imagine a woman praying so hard and passionately for God to provide her a son, and in turn promising the Lord that she would give him to His service. Can you imagine, probably at 3 years of age, Samuel being given to Eli to be guided in serving the Lord, and that is just what he did.

Being a servant is hard. It sometimes means putting others' needs before your own and losing yourself to the One Who is the reason you have become a servant. Hannah gave Samuel directly for the Lord's service. In turn, the Lord called on Samuel directly and personally, and used Samuel as His servant. I have learned in the ministries God has given me that the more I serve, the closer I need to be to Him. When we give ourselves up to serve, the more we need God to sustain us.

Reflection: Can we, today, honestly call ourselves servants to the Lord's call?

Prayer:

Jesus, help us be better servants, so we may rely on You when we are in need.

Pray for Seventh Day Baptists in India (Andhra Pradesh), Jamaica, and Kenya.

Wednesday, January 4, 2017

It's Our Choice: Pray or Be Prey

Scripture: Micah 7:18-19, Psalm 103:12,
Hebrews 10:17, 1 John 1:9

David was a man after God's own heart (Acts 13:22). David's life had many highs and some lows.

Just like David, unfortunately sometimes our negatives outweigh our positives. We can do a million good things, but the one time we mess up, it seems like all the good is forgotten. David messed up bad—I mean real bad. But what's amazing about David was that when he asked the Lord for forgiveness and the Lord forgave him, David truly knew that he was forgiven. He walked around like nothing ever happened and he worshiped God day and night in the good and the bad.

This year I learned from David's tenacity, and it felt amazing. I messed up really bad with one of the members of my church. But as soon as I realized my horrible error, I didn't want to wait to apologize, so as soon as I could, I did. And then I asked God for His forgiveness for what I had done. After I did that, I remember thinking this is how David must have felt after God forgave him, because I felt new and fresh and good—like I had done exactly what my King expected of me.

What I needed to do was to mend my relationship with my sister in Christ. What it took was for me to give my apology sincerely, and truly feel for the person I had wronged. That set me free. I think David worshiped in the good times and the bad times because he was truly free to speak to God.

Reflection: The true feeling of being forgiven is the true pouring out of your heart to God.

Prayer:

Lord, help me pour it all out to you when asking for forgiveness, and remind me that your forgiveness is 100% true.

Pray for Seventh Day Baptists in Malawi, Mozambique, and the Netherlands.