

The Meeting Place was Shaken!



**Seventh Day Baptist
Week of Prayer 2018**

2018 Seventh Day Baptist Week of Prayer

Sponsored by the SDB World Federation (www.sdbwf.org)

During the first full week of January since 1967, Seventh Day Baptists around the world have united in prayer by using the SDB Week of Prayer booklet. This year's theme is based on Acts 4:23-31 and is titled "The Meeting Place was Shaken."

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.
5. **To provide leadership training** for Conference leaders, pastors and lay leaders appropriate to each individual Conference, as determined through consultation.

Contributions: The SDB World Federation encourages all member Conferences to designate an offering from their churches at least once a year in support of the purposes of the SDB World Federation. Other contributions and designations from Conferences, churches, and/or individuals are also welcome. Please make all checks or money orders out to SDBWF. Contact the Treasurer for the mailing address or you may also pay via PayPal at treasurer@sdbwf.org

Sessions: The last General Session was held in Brazil (Curitiba, Parana) on January 22-28, 2017 with the theme, "The Kingdom of God is Like...". The next General Session is planned to occur in North America in 2022.

Officers for the World Federation include General Secretary Andrew Samuels (general.secretary@sdbwf.org); President Jonas Sommer (president@sdbwf.org); Treasurer Garfield Miller (treasurer@sdbwf.org); Assistant General Secretary Michael Spearl; Recording Secretary Karen Umaña; and Vice Presidents Reginald Zink (Australia/New Zealand), Claudia Ferguson (Caribbean), Canaan Phiri (Africa), Douglas Machado (South America), John Pethtel (North America) and Al Paypa (Asia).

About the Author **John J. Pethtel**

John was born in a small town in West Virginia in the United States. He started attending the Salem (WV) SDB Church after an invitation from a school friend to a summer children's program. Through the SCSC (Summer Christian Service Corps) ministry of the SDB General Conference of



the USA & Canada, he came to believe in Jesus Christ as Lord and Savior through a salvation message shared at a SDB summer camp (Camp JOY) at the age of 13. He was baptized in 1994.

John felt a call to pastoral ministry beginning at the age of 17 and his church licensed him to preach. John has served in pastoral ministry for almost 20 years in churches

in West Virginia, Michigan, Maryland, Georgia, and Colorado.

Pastor John is a graduate of Salem International University (formerly Salem College in Salem, WV) with a Bachelor of Arts degree (Management of Not-for-Profit Organizations), Capital Bible Seminary (Lanham, MD) with a Certificate in Theology, Denver Seminary (Littleton, CO) with a Master of Divinity degree (Philosophy of Religion emphasis), and is currently a doctoral student at Denver Seminary studying Church and Parachurch Executive Leadership.

He is currently employed by the SDB General Conference of USA & Canada as their Director of Church Development & Pastoral Services, while also serving as Pastor of Stewardship at SpringsLife Church and as Vice President for North America for the SDB World Federation.

John has been married for 15 years to his beloved bride, Tabatha. They have two children, Xavier and Addison, and reside in Colorado Springs, CO.

Powerful Prayer is Centered on God and NOT on Our Needs

Scriptures to Consider: 1 Kings 18:36-37; 2 Chronicles 5-6;
Nehemiah 9; John 15:5-7; Acts 4:23-31

The first biblical practice of powerful prayer is focused primarily on God (His character, attributes, and will) rather than on us or our needs.

In Acts 4:23-31, Peter and John's lives had just been threatened. But instead of beginning their prayer meeting asking for protection, they quoted the Psalms about God's sovereignty as ruler of all creation and His omnipotence in the need for His son, Jesus, to be sacrificed.

In Nehemiah 9, they gather for a solemn assembly. They eventually ask God to help them in their difficult times but first they read Scripture, praise God, and confess sin for more than half of a day. When they turn to prayer, they pray for 28 verses before they make a request of God.

In 2 Chronicles 5-6, Solomon leads a worship service that focuses on God for quite some time before he makes a request of God.

So why did these saints begin their prayer time with focusing on God?

1. God was more important to them than getting their needs met.
2. God is worthy of honor and praise.
3. It helps us to see things from God's viewpoint and focus on His will.

Start your prayer meeting by reading, listening to, and reflecting on Scripture. Start with praising, meditating, and testifying to His name. Start with speaking or singing about God and who He is. Confess your sins to one another and to God. Speak the gospel to one another and be reminded of His love and forgiveness for those who believe in Him.

Then connect with God in prayer because without Him we can do nothing but through Him we can ask whatever. Our prayer without a focus on God will produce nothing. Our prayer focused on God will result in God's answer for us. This connection will align our focuses with God's.

Unconnected and unfocused from God will result in a self-orientation. Connected and focused to God will result in a God-orientation. Focusing on God for prayer first renews our mind as to what is most important and will allow God through the Holy Spirit to transform our hearts.

Prayer Focus: In your prayer time today, do not make requests of God. Rather just praise Him for who He is. How much of your time do you spend on your dreams, finances, and desires rather than His for you and your church? He has done more than what we could ask or imagine.

Pray for Seventh Day Baptists to align their will and plans to God's will and plan for them.

Powerful Prayer Responds to God from the Heart

Scriptures to Consider: Genesis 4:1-5; 2 Kings 3:1-14;
Jeremiah 29:13; Matthew 5:8; 13:15; Hebrews 10:22

A second biblical practice of powerful prayer: it was always a response to God from the heart of the person or people praying. In the Bible, God did not separate the prayers to Him from the heart condition of the people praying to Him. For example, look at the offerings of Cain and Abel in Genesis 4 or the prayers of Jehoshaphat and Jehoram in 2 Kings 3.

Powerful prayer does not happen when we live as we want and then cry out to God just when we need something or when crisis hits. We must cultivate a lifestyle of holiness that helps keep our heart turned toward God. We can do this by remembering His truths, His promises, and His actions toward His people. We can do this by reading Scripture and by striving to live holy lives.

We can respond to God in prayer as a reflection of God's love for us and as an expression of our love for God. We can respond to God in prayer with the thanksgiving and praise that He rightly deserves.

Our response to God from our heart is an indicator of our worship of Him. Is it lukewarm? Are we worshipping God in Spirit and truth? Our prayers to God are telling of what we think of Him. Do we view Him as Creator of the Universe or do we view Him as a wish granter?

Preparing our heart for prayer and worship becomes important then. Whenever the people of the Bible appeared before God, there was preparation involved. Confession of biblical truth and sin helps us to prepare ourselves before coming to God's throne.

Our hearts in coming to prayer before God should desire the mere presence of God rather than things, the will of God rather than our wants, and the heart of God rather than our feelings.

Prayer Focus: In your prayer time today, ask God to search your heart and to renew and transform it. Do you seek things from God or do you seek God to show you things? Are you prepared to confess your sin to God? His conviction of your sin is a sign of His favor of loving you enough to show you that you are not perfect but yearn for the One who is Perfect. Thank God for His blessing to you and your church. Let God know how much He is loved by you and how much you recognize His love for you. Expect Him to respond to your response through answered prayer.

Pray for Seventh Day Baptists in Australasia (Australia & New Zealand).

Powerful Prayer Seeks First the Kingdom of God

Scriptures: Psalm 86:11; Matthew 6:5-13; 6:33; John 13:33-34; Philippians 1:9-11; 2:1-5; Colossians 1:9-11; 1 Timothy 2:1-4; Revelation 5:9

A third biblical practice for powerful prayer is seeking God's Kingdom first in everything. It is what Jesus came preaching about and what He encouraged others to be seeking. The Kingdom of God is mentioned in how not to pray and then how to pray appropriately and in God's power.

Seek first the Kingdom of God and His righteousness. What does this mean? First, the Kingdom is wherever Christ's rule and reign is present and active. Second, the Kingdom culture puts God's interests and will ahead of our own. Third, the Kingdom includes every tribe, tongue, and nation. Fourth, the Kingdom and its culture can impact society through justice and goodwill.

If we seek the Kingdom first, it has implications on our life's priorities and goals. Kingdom thinking and praying desires for it to be like eternity here on earth. It does not eliminate other desires but rather prioritizes them so that we desire living water before actual water, or others before ourselves. Your identity will change from whatever it has been to servant of God and citizen of heaven.

Seeking the Kingdom includes building up the body of believers by being faithful to the "one another's" of Scripture. God's redemption plan and Christ's Kingdom agent is the church. Therefore, the health of the body of Christ is integral to God's plan to make the "Kingdom come."

However, the heart of God desires all to become citizens of the Kingdom. Not only must we be praying for the faithfulness of those who profess faith in Christ, we must be praying for and serving those who are far from Christ in their belief and living. God intends for us to be active in our communities to speak the gospel and to live the gospel. This is how the Kingdom grows. Our obedience to God impacts the lives of those we love and those we live with.

Prayer Focus: Pray for what God's heart longs for. Seek God's Kingdom first. Is your heart willing to delay meeting your personal desires to help God fulfill His desires? Pray for your church leaders as they equip the believers for ministry. Pray for your political leaders. Pray for revival among those who profess faith. Pray for doors of opportunity to reach those who have never heard the gospel. Pray for how you might serve King Jesus.

Pray for Seventh Day Baptists in North and South America (United States, Canada, & Brazil).

Powerful Prayer Recognizes God's Answers and Actions

Scriptures: Genesis 22:1-14; 2 Chronicles 7; Psalm 51:6; Matthew 21:22; Acts 16:6-10; 2 Corinthians 9:8-15; Ephesians 1:17-19; Philippians 2:13; 2 Timothy 1:7

A fourth biblical practice for powerful prayer is recognizing God's answers and actions. All of those who had intimate relationships with God throughout the Bible could recognize when God was speaking and acting around them. Whether it was Solomon at the temple dedication, Paul and the Macedonian call, or Abraham moving from Ur, they could sense when God was moving and decided to join Him in that work.

I believe God intends for us to be able to do the same. It is possible for us to recognize God's voice and actions around us. This happens when we seek Him and are expecting Him to be speaking and working.

We can tell how God has worked and spoken and how God might work and speak again through our knowledge of Scripture. The Bible is the standard for discerning who God is, what He intends, and how He might accomplish it. God uses the Bible to stir or strengthen us in our service to Him. God uses the Bible to reveal His plans for us. God also uses the Bible to help conform us to the image of Christ.

Through recognizing how God is speaking and acting and then joining Him, we are able to more intimately know Him and to be able to point others to Him. It is God who gives us desire to love and to serve. It is God who provides for our needs through ordinary or extraordinary means. It is God who gives us strength through trials and temptations.

Can you recognize the ways that God works in the world? Judgment and mercy shown by God supernaturally or through others is one way in which He works to us. How many of us can see His grace and mercy at work? How many of us can see the ways in which He is refining us through pressures?

Prayer Focus: What have you seen God doing to invite you into deeper relationship with Him? What clear assignment is He giving you in service to others in your community? How is God speaking to your heart or soul right now? What is He telling you and how should you respond? Have you asked Him to grow your desire for Him and His will? How is God working in the life of your church right now? How is His grace evident?

Pray for Seventh Day Baptists in Europe (England, Netherlands, & Poland).

Powerful Prayer Casts All Cares Upon God

Scriptures to Consider: Psalm 18:3-19; Psalm 22:10; John 2:1-12;
Philippians 4:6-7; 1 Peter 5:7-10

A fifth biblical practice of powerful prayer is casting all of our cares upon God. There will be times in our lives when we will be personally in need. We might be going through a trial. We might be experiencing temptation. We may need major provision. We may need safety. Our transformed hearts will cry out to God to save us, to help us, and to heal us.

We are encouraged in Scripture at times such as these to cast all of our cares upon the Lord “because He cares for you.”

Three characteristics marked the heroes of faith in their interactions with God and enabled them to be able to cast all of their cares upon Him.

1. They really believed that God loved them and cared about them.

They had personal relationships with God that helped give them comfort and faith to make it through rough times.

2. They looked to God as the source to meet their needs.

When they were tempted to rely on their own power to solve their problems, they were reminded that God’s plans and ways are better than their own plans.

3. They trusted God to handle things according to His wisdom.

God has in store for us the best things and ways to accomplish His purposes; both for His glory and for our good.

God wants us to trust Him. Too often our prayers to Him look like needy children whining at their parents. When this happens, the children are asking but they don’t expect an answer. This is why God wants us not to worry about things. He will encourage in us an attitude of thanksgiving and gratitude so that we might protect our hearts. Gratitude reminds us that God’s heart really wants the best for us and that we can trust Him. We do not need to badger Him or explain what He ought to do for us. We only need the assurance that He hears us and knows our hearts and what is best for us.

Prayer Focus: What keeps you from sharing your burdens with God and with others in your church? Do you believe that God wants what is best for you? What are you thankful to God for? What is my attitude toward prayer when I am grateful for God’s mercy and grace with respect to my life?

Pray for Seventh Day Baptists in Asia (India & The Philippines).

Powerful Prayer Develops Powerful Relationships

Scriptures to Consider: Psalm 145; John 16:13-15; Acts 1:14-2:1; 2:42-47

What I can see throughout the Bible is that when God's people pray together, they grow together. God's actions can be made powerfully visible when we love one another. The Lord frequently added to the number of the church when they were taking care of one another, serving others, and praying to God. It appears as if their favor with God flowed largely from the depth of their love for one another.

We pray best with those whom we are closest. When we do not know someone well, it is difficult to pray deeply with them or for them. When we do know someone well but there is a relational conflict, it is difficult to pray with them. When we spend time with one another, eat meals together, share burdens, and serve God with each other, prayer tends to come naturally.

Prayer meetings will only be dynamic in your church if you actually live life together more than one day a week. Activities that encourage relationship building also build up to dynamic and powerful prayer.

Being in "one accord" helps with powerful prayer. To have this kind of unity is to pray for the same things. When we are united in our desires, mission, and purpose, prayer can become very powerful. This kind of unity requires a deep love for others and the knitting of souls together. This kind of unity becomes powerful when the focus turns towards helping or seeing the good of others rather than our own selves.

When these kind of relationships and unity exist, it becomes easier to discern the guiding of the Holy Spirit for a church. This makes prayer powerful when we are under the leading of the Holy Spirit toward what and who to pray for and for how to respond and recognize God and His actions. With this discernment of the Holy Spirit, we can see and understand how others are affected by our prayers.

Prayer Focus: Ask God for opportunities to spend time with others from your church. Build deeper relationships with them. Come up with ways to spend time with others you pray with outside of church. With your church, come to a conclusion as to an assignment God has given you. Knit your heart closer to others by sharing with and serving others. Concern yourself and your prayers with the spiritual walk of others.

Pray for Seventh Day Baptists in the Caribbean (Guyana & Jamaica).

Powerful Prayer Happens When We Gather Together and Rest in Christ

Scriptures to Consider: Genesis 2:18; Psalm 73:25;
Matthew 18:20; Romans 12:4-5; Hebrews 10:25

There is no doubt in my mind that powerful prayer can happen because the prayer of a righteous man can avail much. However, when we gather together in one accord with lenses of God's grace to see how God will respond, mighty things can happen.

As you gather in your churches on Sabbath day, you will most certainly be praying. May these prayer lessons become a lifestyle for your church. Incorporate them into your decision making. Use them before your outreach events. Count on God to participate in your gatherings. Trust the Holy Spirit to guide your progress. Focus on one step in God's mission for your church at a time and watch God be faithful to His promises.

As we rest on the Sabbath from our labors, let us not rest from the work of advancing God's Kingdom. Be proactive in your prayer for God's favor, for God's will, and for God's glory to be made real to you and to your congregation.

Christ promises to one day return for all those who belong to Him. He has participated in the creation of all things, invaded history as a man to know what it is like to be us in every way, He lived a perfect life because we could not (and still cannot), He died a substitutionary death taking our sins upon Himself incurring God's full wrath, He was raised from the dead to give us hope, He is interceding on our behalf, and will return so that at the Judgment Day God will see His righteousness instead of ours if we place our faith in Him. Because of this, we can rest from our worry and from our guilt and shame.

Will you and your church become powerful prayer warriors for His glory and for our good? Amen.

Prayer Focus: Be thankful for your church family. Be thankful for those gathered with you today. Be thankful for those who helped in your faith story. Be thankful for those that God will use you and your church to reach. Encourage rest in Christ. Anticipate His return and celebrate. Rejoice in the hope we have in eternal life. Live like you belong to Jesus.

Pray for Seventh Day Baptists in Africa (Burundi, Kenya, Malawi, Nigeria, Rwanda, South Africa, Uganda, Zambia).



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