



ILLINOIS Focus

Editorial



John Gryns,
President

The end of what some have described as, "The Lord's Prayer," shares this divine

vision for those coming generations later: "I have made you known to them, and will continue to make you known to them in order that the love you have for me may be in them and that I myself may be in them." (John 17.26) Ending this prayer tying love to the revelation of both Jesus and the Father remains a powerful word for praying disciples today. As a worldwide movement, how does this life of discipleship, continuously bathed in prayer, inform us as to the revelation of God that leads to deeper and deeper love—"love you have for me may be in them." That is such a deep love. No doubt, the language of love can easily be lost the ubiquitous presence in our day. The entanglement of culture and the word can easily lead to a "sandy" version (ever try holding sand with a fork?). If we understand that there is this triangulation of Jesus, Father, and Love so that all are very real and present in our tangible, day-to-day lives, the power of the presence of this Father, Jesus, and eventually the Spirit will make our lives "noisy with love." The ongoing revelation of the Trinity must continuing embed deeper and deeper the ways of love. However, to move away from connecting

love to the revelation of this Trinity remains perhaps a constant struggle for us who may be so enculturated in a mere intellectual "grasping" (I say, "grasping" because can we ever really, deeply grasp the revelation?). In other words, any doctrine or belief tied to "revelation," and any portion of the Trinity can never really satisfy the divine and human need for love. Thus, even something as "mundane" as prayer cannot become merely a list or a gossip column of conversation but must ultimately lead us in becoming people of deeper

the very objects of His prayer, He did not relent on revelation and love. The full weight of that moment did not deter Him from the great object of His heart—the generations who would come after this divine appointment. My brothers and sisters, may we never forget the delicate balance between revelation and love in the midst of our moments where the weight of the world seems to build on our shoulders. May we never allow that weight (or the demands of that weight) to overshadow the power of revelation and love. May our lives

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Issue Focus

Discipleship & Prayer

and deeper love. Jesus refuses in this prayer to disassociate revelation and Trinity from the deepening forming power of love. I have become much more aware of this as I encounter people from many other cultures and how those cultures express any part of this triad: Jesus, Father, Love. I must be much more open to learning their valued expressions without compromising this mighty revelation of the Father and Jesus. I am still amazed at the power of how Jesus closed this prayer. While navigating all the emotions of the moment (shadow of the cross looming larger and larger) and while knowing as well the reality of what was coming for

of prayer be bathed in both divine revelation and divine love. And may we, through all of this, never actively seek to resolve the tension that revelation and love will bring to our personal lives and to our community. The power of that indwelling Spirit can slow us down so that we are not overwhelmed. And that same Spirit can teach us to hold that tension for the duration of our journey with Jesus.

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Teach Us to Pray

“The Lord’s prayer is intentionally pointed and simple.”



Pete Braman,
Ministerial Director

It was a regular custom for the Rabbi to teach his disciples a simple, often repetitive prayer. Luke 11:1 states that “Jesus was praying in a certain place, and when He ceased, that one of His disciples said to Him, ‘Lord, teach us to pray.’”

The context of this passage seems a bit peculiar. Usually, Jesus would retreat to a quiet place for reflection with His Father. These disciples seemed intent on listening to, and perhaps even sneaking up on Jesus while He prayed to His Father. Other disciples maybe shared how Jesus Prayers were entirely unlike what they had been exposed to in religious gatherings. Jesus modeled a prayer that was intimate, authentic, and heartfelt to His Father. It was not the “vain repetitions” or “many words” He spoke against in Matthew 6:7. Jesus then shared arguably the most profound, quoted prayer throughout history.

We know it to be the Lord’s Prayer, but some have argued it should be entitled the “disciple’s prayer.” This prayer was likely not a prayer Jesus would have prayed to His Father. One note of evidence is that Jesus did not need to pray for forgiveness as our sinless savior. Why is this prayer so important to us as His disciples and to others we are called to disciple?

Before we delve into the principles of prayer associated with the Lord’s prayer, it remains important to explore the preceding versus. The modeling of Rabbis in Jesus day was to engage in a flurry of good deeds and righteous acts. While Martha had good

intentions to serve Jesus, Mary was given greater affirmation for “choosing what is better” (Luke 10:42) Spending intimate time listening to and learning from Jesus should be the primary privilege, joy, and focus of any disciple.

The Lord’s prayer is intentionally pointed and simple. Jesus was sharing meaningful content while avoiding the empty prayer habits often practiced. The disciples were likely exposed to prayers that seemed directed to an impersonal, distant God. The sequence of His prayer was very intentional.

“Our Father” reminds us that we are His children. As our Father He is loving, caring, and trustworthy. As disciples we must have an accurate picture of God during our spiritual journey. “Hallowed be thy name” tells us to come before God as worshippers. He is worthy of our adoration and praise as our Holy God. “Your kingdom come” highlights our need to focus on what matters most to God. His kingdom was the most prevalent theme expressed by Jesus. His kingdom is both on “earth as it is in heaven.” The gospel is a special invitation to live and share God’s eternal kingdom.

“Your will be done” challenges us to trust that God answers prayers in our best interest and not our own interest. The power of prayer merges our will, and our lives, into harmony with God’s will. Following God’s will should humbly remind us that we must be His obedient servants.

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Prayer, the Act of Worship



Josant Barrientos Jr.,
Youth Director

“Prayer is the expression of understanding... our dependence on our Creator.”

Worship is the conscious action, individually and publically, of declaring the greatness, majesty, character, and love of God. The key element of worship is expressed in the Christian lifestyle through prayer. Prayer is an individual act that grants us direct access to God, it helps to strengthen our relationship with Him, it helps us be a blessing to everyone around us, it also provides guidance and direction. This happens, as prayer does not bring God down to us but brings us up to Him. This action, demonstrates that our creator is the only One who deserves glory, honor, and power (Revelation 4:11) for who He is, for what He has done and for what He will do.

Prayer is the expression of understanding and accepting our dependence on our Creator (Psalms 18:2). It is the response that expresses that He is the only one that can provide safety, protection, and salvation (John 3:16). Also, prayer is not about the fulfillment of our own desires but is about surrender of self and the desires of self to the will of God. This is the creature-creator relationship in which we find pleasure, delight, happiness, and satisfaction in doing His will (Psalms 40:8).

Even more, prayer is the personal inner-response of worship, adoration, and submission to God while discipleship is the public outer-response of worship, adoration and submission to God that demonstrates what the person is experiencing in their personal relationship with God. Some of the discipleship responses include, singing, scripture reading, outreach, gathering, mission work, and only when necessary, preaching. And some of these outer-responses begin individually and are demonstrated publicly (Matthew 6:6).

Sadly, because of the many different views and in some cases, some misunderstandings of prayer, there is a never-ending discussion and conflict about what is the “correct” or “appropriate” way of praying, which in most cases, are mainly done for the satisfaction of one's own desires and based on the cultural background and traditions. However, prayer must be done with its clear purpose, which is to worship our creator, God, for everything He has done for us through his son Jesus, whom now is working on our behalf, interceding for us in the heavenly sanctuary as our High Priest (Hebrews 4:14-16; 7:25).

The truth is that the gathering in church to pray and worship weekly must be a celebration of what the person has been doing and what has experienced during the week in their personal time with God. Even more, we need to remember that “to the humble, believing soul, the house of God on earth is the gate of heaven. The song of praise, the prayer, the words spoken by Christ's representatives, are God's appointed agencies to prepare a people for the church above, for that loftier worship into which there can enter nothing that defiled” (Testimonies Vol. 5 p. 491). For this reason, praying together, expressing our inner and outer-response of worship, adoration and submission to God, is also a way to remember the covenant that one day Jesus will come back and will fulfill all His promises.

Therefore, as we experience delight in praying to God, we are not to forget that the act of prayer reveals the process by which in worship we may experience repentance, forgiveness, righteousness, communion with God, and service to the world. God is the audience of our worship, especially our prayer. He is the one receiving respect, reverence, and adoration. For this reason, we must be humble to look for what He has left in His word as a guide in order to present a true, real, and acceptable worship, collectively and individually, for Him (Romans 12:1-2).

Have a Little Talk with Jesus

If you are anything like me, you just love a romance. Hollywood has made millions by portraying it on the silver screen. Libraries and bookstores are full of books and novels, some having sequels keeping us spellbound and captivated by those who are "in love." The thought of being "in love" and seeking to live happily ever after is still what we want or desire. Sit at the feet of those who are mature and you will soon discover that they can recall receiving that first card or letter and how it made them feel. If they were honest, many would admit that they still hold on to and treasure those items. Some may even pull them out to read again and again.

With my very vivid imagination, it would not be hard for me to imagine that our relationship with God is much the same way. When we first get to know God, we express this newfound relationship in terms like: "I fell in love with Jesus" and we are eager to share this relationship with others. Ron Parsons wrote in his book *The Sixty Minute Marriage Builder*, "A lack of communication is the number one reason for fail marriages," and he adds that that "all kinds of reasons have been suggested as to why we find it so hard to communicate." (p.17)

For the Christian, prayer is the avenue that we communicate with God. Ellen White wrote that "Prayer is the opening of the heart to God as to a friend. Not that it is necessary in order to make known to God who we are, but in order

to enable us to receive Him. Prayer does not bring God down to us but brings us up to Him." *Steps to Christ*, p. 93. Intentional, daily, and persistent prayer is vital for the Christian as God loves to hear His children praying.

The prayers of God's people (their love letters) are introduced in Revelation 5:8. In this beautiful passage of scripture we find that in the throne room of Heaven, twenty-four elders fall down before the Lamb, "each holding a harp, and golden bowls full of incense which are the prayers of the saints."

Of course, what many people crave is not for somebody to talk to them (or at them) but for someone who will actually listen to them and truly hear the matters of their heart without criticism or condemnation but with a deep love and compassion for them. Our God is just that kind of friend. He yearns to listen to His children pray. He invites us to come to Him and pour out our broken and contrite hearts using words, singing songs or even writing in a prayer journal.

Our God is so amazing that when we cannot find the words to pray aloud, He is able to read our hearts, hear our faintest cry, and then give His best answer by and by. Prayer opens the door for us to have a little talk with Jesus and trust Him to make everything alright in accordance with His Word, His Will, and in His own Way.



Pastor Ralph Shelton

The Bible tells us that the Prophet Daniel and King David both prayed three times a day. In our study of God's Word we will also see in the New Testament in the book of Acts that some of the apostles prayed three times a day as well. Please take some time to study Dan. 6:10; Psalms 55:16, 17 and Acts 2:15, 3:1, 10:9.

We must each remember that the only command that we have regarding the frequency of our time in prayer is a text related to our need to be devoted to prayer. The Bible says, "rejoicing in hope, patient in tribulation, continuing steadfastly in prayer; distributing to the needs of the saints, given to hospitality" Romans 12:12 -13. We are then encouraged to "Continue earnestly in prayer, being vigilant in it with thanksgiving" Colossians 4:2.

We also find our Lord and Savior encouraging us to pray as He uttered the words, "Then He (Jesus) spoke a parable to them, that men always ought to pray and not lose heart," Luke 18:1.

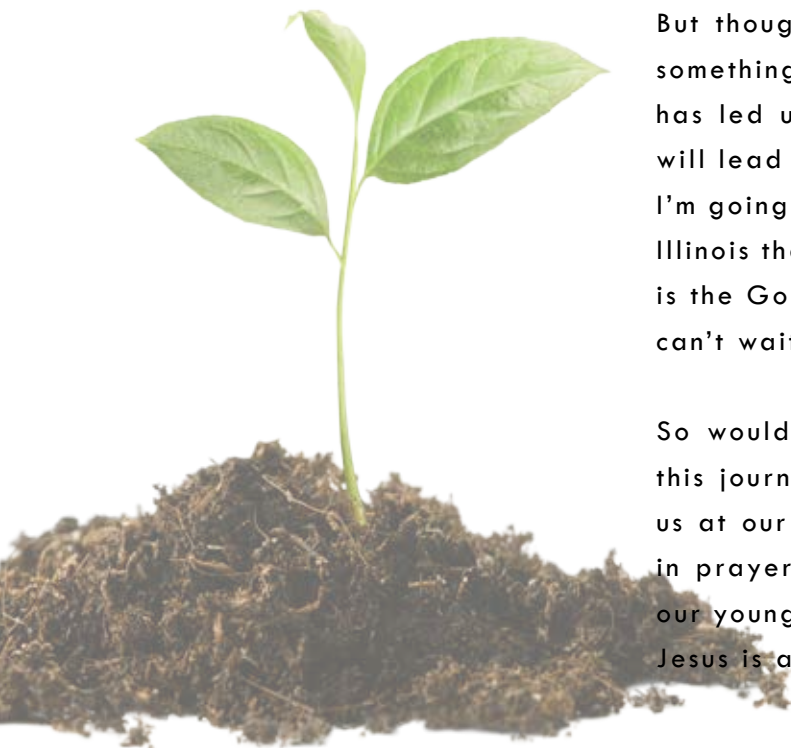
NEW SEASON. SAME GOD.



Ecclesiastes 3 reminds us that “There is a time for everything, and a season for every activity under the heavens”. For us here in the Youth Department, we’ve stepped into a new season. We’re transitioning and expanding our team to best serve all our Illinois youth and young adults.

But though we have new faces in our department, there’s something that will never change...God. The same God that has led us through this last season, is the same God who will lead us in the next. In Isaiah 43:19, God says “Behold! I’m going to do a new thing...”, and we believe that here in Illinois that promise reigns true today. The God of the past is the God of the present and He has big plans for us. We can’t wait to watch it unfold.

So would you do us the honor of partnering together on this journey? Swing by the department, and say hi. Catch us at our next event and let us know your name. Join us in prayer as we seek an outpouring of the Holy Spirit on our young people. Come be an active part of the new thing Jesus is about to do right here in Illinois.



Beverly Sandeen

“ The Lord has blessed me with the opportunity to come back and teach in the Seventh-day Adventist Educational System. I have been teaching for over ten years and have always enjoyed sharing the Gospel of Jesus Christ with all ages of children. I have been blessed with a loving family. I have been married to my husband, Aaron, for 22 years. We have two children, Eryn and Isaac.

I have always been encouraged with the Bible verse Psalms 118:1, “Give thanks to the Lord, for He is good. His love endures forever.” Giving thanks to the Lord is very important. Every morning when I drive to school, I get to see the magnificent sunrise that God has created. I am in awe of His greatness, of His power, of His love for me! I am grateful that the Lord has blessed me with the ability to teach others of His mercy, His forgiveness, and His grace that He has given to us.



WELCOME TO OUR TEAM

Diana Carolina Rivera

“ I was born in Colombia. I am a pastor's wife and mother of two boys. My eldest son is 15 years old, and my youngest is 12 years old. I have been teaching Preschool and Elementary school for 20 years and High school for the last six years. For the past eight years, I had the privilege of serving as the Area Coordinator for Adventurers and Pathfinders in the Illinois Conference, where I helped train teachers and leaders of Children's Ministry, Adventurers, and Pathfinder. I am passionate about teaching, but I'm also passionate about equipping other teachers with the best tools to help their students. One of the ways I do it is through my YouTube channel called “Ideas Biblicas con Carolina,” where I share instructions, ideas for classes, and different resources.

One of my passions is writing. I wrote a curriculum for kindergarten and first grade. The book is in the editing process and will be available soon. Another of my passions is music. I like to teach using music as a learning tool. I am working on my first musical bilingüe (Spanish-English) production for children. With these songs, children will be able to learn the Spanish language. I love Adventist Education. I chose this profession because I love to teach, help, and serve in the community. Also, I love Jesus, and His life as a teacher inspired me. I found in my profession an opportunity to serve God and the community. I want to be a significant influence in the lives of the students of the new generations.



WELCOME TO OUR TEAM

Joseph Lowe

Greetings! My wife, Laura and I are excited for the opportunity to serve the Lord and Adventist Education, here at Hinsdale Adventist Academy (HAA) and its surrounding communities. We have three sons, Ethan, Zachary and Mason, ages 22, 20 and 17 years of age. We are still laughing at how the Lord opened doors, leading us to the Chicagoland area. Last year I was serving as the Director of Recruitment at Shenandoah Valley Academy, New Market, Virginia. my alma mater. Our eventual goal was to return to our home in Virginia Beach, as well, return to the healthcare industry. I have been in healthcare leadership for nearly 25 years and Laura is a Nurse Practitioner. Out of the blue the current Principal of HAA invited us to come take a look at all the great things the Lord has been doing for the school. A combination of her leadership and community involvement made us want to be a part of it. We believe that the Lord led us here and we are looking forward to seeing how He will use all of us in this community.



WELCOME TO OUR TEAM

Alex Cruz

After being freshly baptized at the Elmhurst Seventh-day Adventist Church in May 2014, I was asked by Pastor Frederick to speak at HAA's High School Bible retreat. While there, a group of students spoke to me about saving their volleyball season by being their head coach. I was skeptical about competition and sports with being new to the faith because competition was my weakness. I went to a volleyball open gym at HAA that following week to see if I would lose myself in competition. The gym looked familiar, and I later found out I had been in that very gym as an 18-year-old celebrating a friend's high school graduation. At the open gym I met long time coach and HAA parent, Ronjo Ombao. While playing with him, he set a great example for me of what sports in a Christian context looks like. I also met Josh Alabata, current Forest Lake Academy Athletic Director. I never coached before, but Josh assured me he'd assist in any way possible with the support I'd need to grow and learn. Eight years have passed since then and I've been able to volunteer as a head coach and assistant coach on both middle school and high school levels for boys' volleyball & basketball. Being a coach at a Christian school was never in my plans. Being an elder at the Elgin Adventist Church was never in my plans. Being a substitute teacher last year was never in my plans. Becoming a P.E. Teacher was never in my plans, but all of this has been in God's plans. Teaching at HAA is the next chapter of a story organized by God that started 18 years ago and I'm excited to mentor the youth to achieve a physical fitness that enhances their mental faculties and abilities to choose Christ in this Great Controversy we are all a part of.



WELCOME TO OUR TEAM

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"Give us this day our daily bread" is the reality of our daily need for God and His provisions. Not only are we powerless to supply our own needs, but we worship a generous, gift giving God who responds to our "asking, seeking, and knocking" (Matthew 7:7-11). "Forgive us our sins" is a reminder that we come to God as sinners in desperate need of a savior. This same mercy received must be extended to those who have sinned against us. "Lead us not into temptation" reinforces the reality that we live in a battlefield where the enemy seeks to "steal and kill" (John 10:10). We desperately need God's divine protection and strength each day.

The "amen" to Jesus model prayer is the hope and assurance of God's victory as the one who has and will continue to "deliver us from the evil one." Jesus knew the disciples were just beginning to grasp the habit of prayer. He is calling us to commit to prayer (however simple) and invite the Holy Spirit to teach us to pray (Luke 12:12).

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The Holy Bible, God's Word does not tell us to pray three, seven, or any number of times, but it does invite us to pray consistently and without ceasing. Family, we must persevere in prayer for our God does hear and He does answer. His word tells us that while we are yet speaking our answer is on the way in His time, not ours.

In closing I am grateful to share the following suggestions on how to begin and continue to pray fervently, intentionally, daily, and with rejoicing: (1) Schedule a daily time of prayer (2) Make mundane tasks a reminder to pray (3) Read the Word of God daily (4) Avoid consuming the trash of this world (5) Have moments of prayer with family and/or other followers of Jesus (6) Learn to enjoy prayer and (7) Know the reason why you want a consistent prayer life.

As you begin (or continue) this journey in prayer, please know that as you commune with God on a daily basis, you are storing up your treasures (love letters) in heaven according to Matthew 6:19, 20. Our Abba (our Father in heaven) will journey with you through the hills, over the mountains, and into life's valleys as you follow Him on your knees in prayer. In prayer, I pray that you will discover a rich, wonderful, and fulfilling relationship with our loving heavenly Father, one that will rival and far exceed any "Love story" that could ever be told in either books or movies. Pray On! Pray On! Pray On!

DEPARTMENTS

President	John Gryso
Executive Secretary	Michael Campos
Treasurer	Douglas Reeves
Education	Katrina Baun
Hispanic Ministries	Ruben Bullon
Ministerial	Pete Braman
Trust Services	Arkadiusz Bojko
Stewardship	Arkadiusz Bojko
Youth	Josant Barrientos Jr.

CONTACT US



619 Plainfield Road,
Willowbrook, IL 60527



(630) 715 3560
info@ilcsda.org
www.ilcsda.org



@illinoisconferencesda