

FEATURE / UNDERSTANDING SCRIPTURE (/BLOG/THEOLOGY)

# Good Friday: Day of Prayer and Fasting

*A guide for navigating the EFCA day of prayer and fasting*

Greg Strand (/blog/authors/greg-strand) | April 9, 2020



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**O**ur EFCA family has been called to a day of prayer and fasting on Good Friday. President Kompelien writes,

"On this day when we remember the death of our Lord Jesus Christ as well as our need for redemption, let's fix our eyes on the One who made the way for our salvation. We know we have a strong Advocate with the Father who hears our calls and tells us to 'cast our cares on Him because He cares for [us]' (1 Pet 5:7). Let's intentionally and humbly bring our world, our nation and our churches to our Savior."

## **This is a sacred, grievous moment, and our prayer and fasting are a desperate-yet-assured cry to the Lord.**

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As humble, dependent believers, daughters and sons, we “pray without ceasing” (1 Thess 5:17). Sometimes there is an added desperateness to our prayers, and they are accompanied with fasting. This is not an attempt to get something from God, but rather a confession with a physical expression of our desire and desperate need for God. At times, prayer and fasting are responses to life’s sacred, grievous moments.

This is a sacred, grievous moment, and our prayer and fasting are a desperate-yet-assured cry to the Lord. With the Psalmist we profess, “Some trust in chariots and some in horses, but we trust in the name of the LORD our God” (Ps 20:7). As we trust in the name of the LORD, we are assured, “O LORD, you hear the desire of the afflicted; you will strengthen their heart; you will incline your ear” (Ps 10:17).

In what follows you will find some guidance for your day of prayer and fasting. We have planned three times of prayer: morning, midday and evening. As a guide, plan to spend 10-15 minutes in prayer during each of these times. We provide Scripture texts to read, questions to ponder for prayer, **hymns to sing (with links to the songs)** (<https://open.spotify.com/playlist/7kmz7HokyDzAHZaH7vfbWn?si=xmcbZLtSRZCBffrzQOOvQ>) and a prayer to pray.

- In the **morning prayer**, we encourage you to spend this time alone with the Lord. The focus is on *repentance*.
- During the **midday prayer**, we encourage you to gather with others in your home. The focus is on *lament*.
- Finally, in the **evening prayer**, we encourage you to gather virtually with others in your church family. The focus is on *hope*. Most will be participating in a virtual—either live-streamed or recorded—Good Friday service. This time of prayer could either become part of that service, or you could contact a few others from the church and invite them to pray.

Use as much or as little of this as you find helpful. The key is joining in prayer with many others in the EFCA family. Prayer is a chief expression of our faith, which is accompanied by an assured hope our Father and our God hears our prayers.

## Morning Word and prayer

The focus of our morning prayer time is *repentance*. Jesus came preaching repentance, calling people to turn away from sin and to believe the gospel, the good news (Mark 1:14-15). Repentance is not only what is required initially to enter the kingdom Jesus came to inaugurate, it is an ongoing mark of those who have believed and received the gospel of Jesus Christ. Furthermore, repentance is a result of God's kindness (Rom 2:4).

**Scripture:** Psalm 51:1-19

**During the present day of living with COVID-19, we also lament and grieve the things we have lost and the things we will not have or experience.**

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In what ways and in what areas of my life do we need God's mercy? Do we realize that even though our sin affects many, ultimately our sin is against God? What hidden sins of the heart have been manifested in the midst of this COVID-19 crisis? What idols of the heart have been revealed?

**Hymns:** "How Deep the Father's Love ([https://youtu.be/z65YxhqYo\\_E](https://youtu.be/z65YxhqYo_E))" and/or "His Mercy Is More (<https://youtu.be/ijsjA5Yf8XA>)"

**Prayer** (based on Psalm 51:10-12):

Merciful God,  
You pardon all who truly repent and turn to you.  
We humbly confess our sins and ask for your mercy.  
We have not loved you with a pure heart,  
Nor have we loved our neighbor as ourselves.  
We have not done justice, loved kindness,  
Or walked humbly with you, our God.  
Have mercy on us, O God, in your loving-kindness.  
In your great compassion,  
Cleanse us from our sin.  
Create in us a clean heart, O God,  
And renew a right spirit within us.  
Do not cast us from your presence,  
Or take your Holy Spirit from us.  
Restore to us the joy of your salvation  
And sustain us with your bountiful Spirit  
Through Jesus Christ, our Lord, Amen.

**Midday Word and prayer**

The focus of our midday prayer is *lament*. Not only does creation “groan,” so do the people of God. We lament between the now and the not-yet of the kingdom. We lament the ongoing implications of living in a fallen world. This is true even of believers who live in a redeemed-not-yet-glorified state. We lament the ongoing struggle with sin. During the present day of living with COVID-19, we also lament and grieve the things we have lost and the things we will not have or experience.

**Scripture:** Psalm 13:1-6

Lamenting in the Psalms is not absent faith but because of faith. How does faith ground your lament, and how does your lament give expression to your faith? How do you avoid the response of either being Pollyanna and denying reality, or being overcome and destroyed by crisis? What are you lamenting and grieving? What losses are you experiencing?

**Hymns:** "It Is Well With My Soul ([https://youtu.be/rhaTIu\\_k4w0](https://youtu.be/rhaTIu_k4w0))" and/or "He Will Hold Me Fast (<https://youtu.be/0345Ls4IJf4>)"

**Prayer** (from *The Worship Sourcebook* (<https://www.amazon.com/Worship-Sourcebook-Second-CD/dp/159255797X>)):

God of life, God of comfort:

Alone,

Afraid,

In fear,

In loss,

We cry out:

“Why, O Lord, why?”

“How long, O Lord, how long?”

We cling to you in hope

Even as we grasp for hope.

So grasp us in your loving embrace

Through Jesus Christ,

Who endured the cross for our sake. Amen.

# Evening Word and prayer

**There is nothing in our lifetimes that compares to COVID-19. And yet, there is hope in the midst of and in the face of the reality of this virus.**

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Our focus in our final time of our day of prayer and fasting is *hope*. Good Friday captures the essence of the moment. On the one hand, there is no way that the day Christ was crucified would be considered “good.” There had never been an act of greater injustice done to an innocent person. And yet, what he accomplished on the cross in dying in our place, of taking our sin is good. In fact, there is no greater good done for us and received by us. This is the tension in which we live in the moment. There is nothing in our lifetimes that compares to COVID-19. And yet, there is hope in the midst of and in the face of the reality of this virus. We affirm God's sweet sovereignty and bitter providence. Good Friday and Easter – Jesus' death, burial, and resurrection – resolve the tension and give us hope today. As Abraham, in hope we believe against hope (Rom. 4:18).

**Scripture:** Romans 8:1-39

What are ways in which we groan with the assurance God is “for us,” and that nothing can “separate us from the love of Christ?” As we remember the death and resurrection of Christ, why is it important for us to remember that God “did not spare his own Son but gave him up for us all, how will he not also with him graciously give us all things?”

**Hymns:** "Jesus Paid It All (<https://youtu.be/-FHwdx5BIvc>)" and/or "In Christ Alone (<https://youtu.be/h2ld1wI2hT8>)"

**Some topics for prayer:**

- For the sick and suffering.
- For the grieving who have lost loved ones.

- For marriages and families.
- For churches, church leaders, missionaries, and Christian ministries.
- For medical personnel, researchers, and public health officials.
- For governmental leaders at the local, state, and federal levels.
- For the unemployed, homeless, vulnerable, and those with special needs.
- For the lost.

**Prayer** (based on Colossians 2:13-15):

Our Father and our God,  
When we were dead in trespasses  
And the uncircumcision of our flesh,  
You made us alive together with Christ,  
When you forgave us all our trespasses,  
Erasing the record that stood against us with its legal demands.  
You set this aside, nailing it to the cross.  
You disarmed the rulers and authorities  
And made a public example of them,  
Triumphing over them in it.  
Through the cross of Jesus Christ  
We are forgiven – the guilt of sin has been removed, the power of sin and evil have  
been overcome,  
Thanks and praise be to you alone – Father, Son, and Holy Spirit. Amen.



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## ABOUT

[Our identity \(/about/who-we-are\)](/about/who-we-are)

[Our faith \(/about/what-we-believe\)](/about/what-we-believe)

[Our mission \(/about/why-it-matters\)](/about/why-it-matters)

## OPPORTUNITIES

[Ways to serve \(/opportunities/serve\)](/opportunities/serve)

[Internships \(/opportunities/internships\)](/opportunities/internships)

[Employment \(/opportunities/employment\)](/opportunities/employment)

## MINISTRIES

[Global mission \(/ministries/reachglobal\)](/ministries/reachglobal)

[National mission \(/ministries/reachnational\)](/ministries/reachnational)

[Crisis response \(/ministries/reachglobal/crisis-response\)](/ministries/reachglobal/crisis-response)

## TRAINING & EVENTS

[Conferences \(/resources/conferences\)](/resources/conferences)

[Courses \(/resources/library?rtype%5B%5D=24&orderby=date&searchterm=#results\)](/resources/library?rtype%5B%5D=24&orderby=date&searchterm=#results)

[Credentialing \(/resources/credentialing\)](/resources/credentialing)

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[Statement of Faith \(/resources/document/efca-statement-faith\)](/resources/document/efca-statement-faith)

[Theological positions \(/resources/document/theological-definitions-positions\)](/resources/document/theological-definitions-positions)

[National office \(/ministries/office-president\)](/ministries/office-president)

[Church districts \(/districts\)](/districts)

[Ministry contacts \(/ministry-contacts\)](/ministry-contacts)

[Preferred providers & partners \(/resources/preferred-providers-and-partnerships\)](/resources/preferred-providers-and-partnerships)

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► 4 | [COVID-19 \(/blog/tags/covid-19\)](/blog/tags/covid-19), [Easter \(/blog/tags/easter\)](/blog/tags/easter), [Good Friday \(/blog/tags/good-friday\)](/blog/tags/good-friday), [prayer \(/blog/tags/prayer\)](/blog/tags/prayer)

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