

# Forward to Week of Prayer 2004

January 2004

The Living God is approachable in Jesus Christ. That is very good news for bad people like us. At the beginning of the year, we have the privilege of approaching Him together: humbly, gratefully, and expectantly. Please God that we would see significant gospel breakthroughs across the whole of Europe (and well beyond) this year, in answer to prayer.

I am very grateful to our Greek brothers and sisters who have provided this year's materials. They have chosen an especially appropriate theme for 2004. Please use these resources creatively: perhaps incorporating technology that you don't usually use at prayer meetings (live telephone calls? CD-ROM presentations?); perhaps by using the creative arts; maybe by adapting some of the content for special "concerts" of prayer for teenagers; perhaps creating special times for all-aged women's or men's celebrations.

As we seek God together, let's pray that we would find ourselves moving forward with Him into the New Year. Let's run the race, together!

Gordon Showell-Rogers  
General Secretary ~ European Evangelical Alliance

# World Week of Prayer Prayer Guide 2004

## THEME

### THE RACE OF FAITH

#### INTRODUCTION

This year's theme was an obvious choice for the Greeks who prepared it. 2004 is an Olympic year. The Olympics are back in Europe; they are back in their birthplace in Greece. This gives us a great opportunity to focus our prayers this week on the athletic language and symbolism that the Apostle Paul used to describe faith and the Christian life and ministry. In this prayer guide we place emphasis on the prayer pointers instead of long introductions and we hope that this will be appreciated.

Paul was impressed by the emphasis of the Hellenic culture on athletic life. This involvement in sports might have been part of his training as a child. It is almost certain that he attended the Isthmian games (these were the counterpart of the Olympic games in the vicinity of Corinth) during the 18 months he stayed in Corinth in 50-51 AD, where all the tentmakers were to supply the visitors with tents. At any rate, the Apostle to the Gentiles lived his own championship race so naturally he uses athletic terms as he describes his life and calls his converts to live Christ and His mission.

As we come to the week of prayer in 2004 — against human hopes and aspirations, we call upon the Lord of Peace. Together by faith and God's grace we will proclaim that we are ready for another year to continue the spiritual race that He has called us to run, and that He will remain the director, the coach and the supreme judge of the race this year.

Let's please Him, brothers and sisters! See you all at the finishing line!

Pan-Hellenic Evangelical Alliance

## SUNDAY

### **The Christian life is a spiritual race of faith.**

I have **fought** the good fight, I have finished the race, I have kept the faith. Now there is in store for me the crown of righteousness, which the Lord, the righteous Judge, will award to me on that day... (II Timothy 4:7-8)

#### **READING 2Tim. 4: 1-8**

Here the spiritual life is described as a race, but also as a fight “Our struggle is not against flesh and blood...” (Ephesians 6:12-18). So we do run, but we also fight against many forces that want to take us out of the race. Our flesh (Gal. 5:17), the world and the Devil (Eph. 2:1-2) can only be overcome by the effects of the death and the resurrection of our Lord (Rom. 6:1-6, Gal.2:20, John 16:33, Gal 6:14. Eph.1:17-23). All these victories that the Lord gained for us, we are called to live them by faith in our every day life. What a race and how glorious the reward of Christ’s crown!

#### *Praise-Thanks*

- We thank God that He is sovereign and sits on His throne (Revelation 4-5) ruling the universe in wisdom and love.
- We praise God that the Holy Spirit is the One who convicts persons concerning sin, righteousness and judgment (John 16:8) and when He regenerates, no human being can resist.
- We are grateful that the powers of Satan cannot prevail against the church of Christ as it advances and takes captives.
- We rejoice that the final victory of the Church is certain because Christ is resurrected and victorious, and He personally guarantees our future.
- We bless God because in our spiritual battle against sin, our Father will never allow us to be tested beyond our strength (I Corinthians 10:13).

#### *Confession*

- We admit that we do not battle against sin “to the point of shedding blood” (Hebrews 12:4). On the contrary, each of us lives in the absurdity of our little daily hypocrisies, trying to compromise that which cannot be compromised.
- We acknowledge that we are not content with the rewards that the Lord promises in the future (Hebrews 11:26), nor the absolute beauty of His presence in the present (Psalm 16:11). We prefer the mediocrity of sin rather than the enjoyment of holiness. How easily we are satisfied!
- We confess that often we forget that our struggle is spiritual, and consequently we struggle with human weapons, neglecting prayer. We try to solve our problems with human wisdom and experience, rather than remembering that we do not need to rely on our own wisdom and we should not imagine ourselves wise (Proverbs 3:5, 7).
- We admit that very often we give importance to “big” sins, neglecting the small daily sins that start with our personality that has not yet been *transformed* by the grace of Christ (Romans 12:2).

### *Requests*

- We pray that we will obtain wisdom and awareness of the spiritual battle in which we are engaged (II Corinthians 10:3-6, Ephesians 6:12-18).
- We ask God to give us spiritual “hunger” for His presence, for prayer and for His Word (Psalm 73:1-3, 119:16 103).
- We ask that our churches will again become filled during the days and times of prayer, not only on Sunday mornings. We pray that we will fight a spiritual battle in prayer, as our Lord did, and then we will evangelize by word and deed, gathering spiritual “plunder.”

## **MONDAY**

**We run the race for the evangelization of our country  
and the entire world by service and by word  
“We dared to tell you His gospel in spite of strong opposition.”  
(I Thessalonians 2:2)**

“Not that I have already obtained all this...Forgetting what is behind and straining toward what is ahead, I **press on** toward the goal to win the prize for which God has called me heavenward in Christ Jesus.” (Philippians 3:12-14)

### **READING** Philippians 3:4-14

This is not only a Marathon race but rather a race with hurdles...Paul and Silas were whipped and thrown into prison in Philippi (Acts 16:22-24). Nevertheless they continued on to Thessalonica and immediately began preaching the gospel (Acts 17:1-4). Most of us in a similar situation would have stayed home until fully recovered. The apostles gave priority to the well-being of Christ’s body instead of their own (1 Cor. 12:27). For this reason they were ready to suffer instead of quitting (2 Cor. 11:23-29). Are we determined to press on?

### *Praise-Thanks*

- We are grateful that all power in heaven and on earth has been given to Christ and with His authority Christ sends us to make disciples in all the world (Matthew 28:18-20) and He promises that He is with us.
- We praise the Lord because He has shown us how to proclaim the Gospel of the Kingdom in both deed and word (Mark 1:39, 40-42).
- We thank God for the example of men and women of faith in the church down through the ages who have faithfully lived for His Kingdom and have not hesitated to give their lives for it (Hebrews 12:1).
- We praise God because in spite of the fact that even when it seems as if we are failures in our own eyes, many times this is success and God’s blessing (Philippians 1:12-18).
- We thank Christ because He has promised that as we struggle for the Gospel, “I will build My church, and the gates of hell will not overcome it” (Matthew 16:18).

### *Confession*

- We admit that we are a church of social “classes.” We do not approach all social groups with love (James 2:1-13).

- Many times we are not ready to receive new souls, because we are concerned that there might be a change in the “image” of the church with which we are comfortable. Often we become like the older brother of the Prodigal Son.
- We acknowledge that do not go after our lost brother as our Lord did. On the contrary, we require that he come to us. Instead of conquering the world, we are afraid that the world is drawing us astray, and with this as an excuse, we close ourselves within our own circles.
- We recognize that do not really care that our neighbors and friends are being lost eternally. We want God to solve our own problems. The Lord, however, is the God of “all flesh.” We acknowledge that do not live for the Kingdom of God. We live as we did before, simply seeking God’s help.
- We admit that have acquired a false picture of evangelism, believing that “we have evangelized” people by giving them a tract or inviting them to hear a sermon. Our Lord, on the contrary, served their needs. To a great extent, we have been indifferent towards the social scourges of our age: unemployment, hunger, child pornography, crime, etc. Instead of the true church of Christ being the pioneer in these struggles, we pacified ourselves that the national care programs are doing the job and we have excused our own negligence as simply weakness.
- Finally, when some come into our churches, we avoid them because we are busy with ourselves and our own needs.

#### *Requests*

- We ask God to give us the compassion of Christ for the lost.
- We pray that God will give us spiritual eyes so that we can see each new day as an opportunity to touch some soul with the love of Christ.
- We request that God will give us wisdom to see today’s challenges and needs that are confronting people around us.
- We pray that the church of Christ will find more practical means of serving the spiritual and physical needs of people, as our Lord did.
- We pray that we will acquire an awareness of how little time we have to serve, as we do not know when the Lord will return again (Matthew 24:45-51).

## **TUESDAY**

### **We run the race to bring a conscious Christian presence to environmental issues**

**“So God created man in His own image, in the image of God He created him; male and female He created them. God blessed them and said to them, ‘Be fruitful and increase in number; fill the earth and subdue it. Rule over the fish of the sea and the birds of the air and over every living creature that moves on the ground.’ ” (Genesis 1:27-28)**

**“You made him ruler over the works of Your hands.” (Psalm 8:6)**

#### **READING** Psalm 8

Those who believe in Christ must love, respect and care for the environment, not only because we live here and have the responsibility to administer creation, but for

another very important reason. Creation is the work of the God in whom we believe and whom we worship. The closer we get to creation, the more we appreciate and enjoy the wisdom of God. It is not only the need to use it that should make us want to protect the environment, but also its divine origin. We worship the creator God, and we must enjoy and also protect the creation He has entrusted into our care.

#### *Praise-Thanks*

- We praise God because all creation “proclaims” the glory of God and His handiwork (Psalm 19:1)
- We praise God because through His creation God reveals His existence and His power (Romans 1:20)
- We thank God because He has given testimony of His care by sending rain and crops, in this way meeting our material needs and giving joy to our hearts (Acts 14:17)
- We thank God because He has honoured us by making us responsible for the works of His hands (Psalm 8:6)
- We thank God because He promises us “new heavens and earth” in which justice will prevail (II Peter 3:13)

#### *Confession*

- We ask forgiveness, because in spite of the fact that God has saved us, we have neglected to care for His creation.
- We have forgotten that whatever God created was “very good” (Genesis 1:31)

#### *Requests*

- We ask that the Lord will help us to understand that we are accountable to Him for stewardship of His creation (Psalm 8:6)
- We need to struggle both as believers and churches, participating with various agencies that promote the protection of the environment.
- We want to pray for a Christian advocacy within local and international agencies that promote “shalom” with people and creation, and for gospel influence in agencies that promote environmental protection and world peace

## **WEDNESDAY**

### **We exercise and grow in spiritual disciplines, in order to run the race more effectively**

**Fight** the good fight of the faith...( I Timothy 6:12)

#### **READING** I Timothy 6:3-16

In a short while the eyes of the world will focus on the various events of the Olympic Games. Young people from all over the world will come to race for some medal or simply for the honour of participating in the races. In order to arrive at this point, all these young people, most of them athletes, have had to discipline themselves, following a course of preparation over many years, watching their sleep, their food, the endless hours of practice, and all of their activities. All of this in order to participate in a race that will only last for a few minutes or for some, only a few seconds! How much more we believers should discipline ourselves in our spiritual

practices, as we participate in a race which terminates in not a simple Olympic medal, but all of eternity.

#### *Praise-Thanks*

- We thank the Lord because He gave us an example by exercising the discipline of prayer (Mark 1:35)
- We praise God because He has given us His Word, and by studying it we can know Him (II Timothy 3:16).
- We thank God for the example of people in the Bible and throughout the course of church history who made their quest for God a way of life with fasting and prayer.
- We praise God because within His Word He teaches us clearly that giving, praying and fasting ought to characterize the life style of the Christian (Matthew 6:1-18).

#### *Confession*

- We acknowledge that we no longer fast. In the Acts of the Apostles, the church fasted when the Holy Spirit spoke to them. They fasted before sending Paul and Barnabas (Acts 13:2). They fasted when they ordained elders (Acts 14:23). They desired that the Gospel would be spread, and for that reason they sought divine guidance through prayer and fasting (II Corinthians 11:27).
- We admit that we do not give sacrificially; when we give, it is from our abundance (Mark 12:41-44).
- Often we cannot differentiate fasting from dieting, true repentance from psychological remorse, prayer from fatalism.
- As Christians, we continue to live for ourselves, and consequently we find little time to exercise ourselves in prayer, Bible study, giving, and fasting.
- We do not believe that the words of Christ are true, when He said, “It is more blessed to give than to receive” (Acts 20:35). If we believed it, we would share more of what God has given us.

#### *Requests*

- We ask to understand that spiritual disciplines are not a burden, but tools which God gives us for our growth.
- We pray that we will begin to exercise ourselves as individuals, as families, and as a church in prayer, fasting, study, and giving.
- We pray that we will acquire a different “image” of the way God wants us to live, that we will understand that whatever God gives us is not exclusively for us to use on ourselves. It is a gift of God for us to use for His Kingdom.
- We pray that we will learn to live contented lives with what we have, without comparing ourselves to others and without finding excuses to store up treasures here on earth but rather in Heaven.

### **THURSDAY**

**We run the race for the goal of essential fellowship  
among brothers and sisters in the local church**

**“Let us not give up meeting together, as some are in the habit of doing, but let us encourage one another—and all the more as you see the Day approaching.”**

**(Hebrews 10:25)**

Yes, and I ask you, loyal yokefellow, help these women who have **contended** at my side in the cause of the Gospel... (Philippians 4:3)

READING: Philippians 4:1-3

Who says that that it is easy to live together as a church? It is not. It is a race—a race of love, forgiveness, humility, longsuffering. In this race the champion is Christ (Philip.2:6-11). We need to follow His example (Philip. 2:1-5). But this race is very fruitful since God blesses us greatly when we live together in harmony and love. In the church we are nurtured, we grow, we are equipped, we are coached and we are encouraged to finish the race of faith!

#### *Praise-Thanks*

- We praise Christ because He is the head of His body, the Church (Ephesians 1:22-23).
- We thank God because when He saved us, He put us in the body of the Church, and we are not alone (I Corinthians 12:13).
- We thank God because within the Church each one of us is important and necessary (I Corinthians 12:22-25).
- We praise God because since He began a good work in us, He will complete it (Philippians 1:6, Ephesians 5:25-27).
- We praise God for all our brothers and sisters, because through their admonition and comfort we can be strengthened in our own struggles (Romans 1:12).

#### *Confession*

- We ask forgiveness because we often believe that we are better than our other brothers and sisters and consequently we do not need them.
- We confess that we have believed that we could love God without loving our brothers and sisters (I John 4:20-21).
- We have underrated the teaching the Bible concerning the Body of the Church and we have made our Christianity “individualistic.”
- We admit that we have allowed personal bitterness to influence our relationships and unfortunately we have led others astray with us.
- We confess that we are afraid of true, essential fellowship, because we do not want to be accountable to anyone else in our lives.
- We acknowledge that often we worship God “individually” in our churches, and not in fellowship with others.
- We realize that we choose to “convict” others of their sins, without ever wanting to stand beside them before they sin.
- Many times we are not moved by the problems of our brothers and sisters, and we do not live with the blessing of there being nobody among us who is poor either spiritually or materially (Acts 4:34).

#### *Requests*

- We ask that God will lead us to seek His face and live in His fear.
- We pray that there will be sincere repentance on our part for our lack of desire to forgive and to “win” our brothers and sisters (Matthew 18:15).

- We ask that reconciliation and forgiveness will come where there are bad relationships.
- We pray that we will love one another earnestly (I Peter 4:8) and that we will love one another in our deeds and not only with our words (I John 3:18).
- We pray for the understanding that our individual growth in obedience and service will bring growth in the church (Ephesians 4:16).

## **FRIDAY**

**Those of us who are privileged to be in families,  
race as families to become a place  
where God will truly be worshipped and honoured**

**“For I have chosen him, so that he will direct his children and his household after him to keep the way of the Lord by doing what is right and just...” (Genesis 18:19)**

**“But as for me and my household, we will serve the Lord” (Joshua 24:15)**

### **READING Joshua 24 : 14-15**

Today the Christian family faces more challenges than ever before. It seems like all the forces of darkness are attacking our families. Nevertheless the Lord is stronger than our enemy (Rom. 8:31). So we need to prayerfully stay in the course of love and care for our own family members.

#### *Praise-Thanks*

- We thank God for the gift of the family (Genesis 1:28).
- We praise God because He appointed the family as the first area where children will learn about God and life.
- We thank Him for the measure to which He has given believing parents and grandparents who led us to faith in Christ (II Timothy 1:5). Others have not had this privilege.
- We thank God for all the believing families that live for the glory of the Lord and for the advancement of His kingdom here on earth.

#### *Confession*

- We acknowledge that we have not used the “weapon” of the family in order to win our children to Christ.
- We confess that we have not diligently taught our children to trust Christ (Deuteronomy 6:6-9).
- Those of us who are married have not been proper examples of Christian men and women as spouses, with the result that the next generation does not have good examples of Christian couples so that they can be inspired for their own families.
- Those of us who are fathers or mothers admit that we have not understood the degree to which we should have taken spiritual responsibility for our families.
- We confess that often parents by the example of their daily lives have undermined the faith of their children instead of building it up.

### *Requests*

- We pray that Christians will develop creative and edifying family devotional materials which will be well used in our homes
- We pray for understanding for all parents of the great responsibility we have in the preparation of the next generation of people (Psalm 78:3-8).
- We ask the Lord to give wisdom to fathers and mothers so that they will use every opportunity to teach their children about God (Deuteronomy 6:7-9).
- We pray that spouses will behave towards each another as God wants them to behave (Ephesians 5:22-31).
- We pray that parents will raise their children in accord with the will of God, not their own desires (Ephesians 6:4).
- We pray that parents will live lives of obedience to the Gospel so that not only with their words, but especially with their examples they will lead their children to Christ (Deuteronomy 6:5-6).
- We pray that children will learn to honor and obey their parents (Ephesians 6:1-2).
- We pray that there will be essential communication between families that raise children, so that each family will be supported by the broader Christian community.
- We pray together for those who would love to be married, and are not, and for those who would love to have children and do not. We pray that our churches would be places where this kind of pain is understood, and where every believer feels “at home” and able to play their full part in serving our heavenly Father.

## **SATURDAY**

### **We run the race to bring about the true presence of the Church of Christ on the world scene**

**“As You sent Me into the world, I have sent them into the world.” (John 17:18)**

Everyone who **competes** in the games goes into strict training. They do it to get a crown that will not last; but we do it to get a crown that will last forever. Therefore I do not **run** like a person running aimlessly; I do not **fight** like a person beating the air. No, I beat my body and make it my slave so that after I have preached to others, I myself will not be disqualified for the prize. (I Corinthians 9:25-27)

**READING** I Corinthians 9:19-27

The world scene is very unsettled. The post cold war world seems even more unstable. More recently fear and various powers in the world have made all world justice discussions seem pointless. How hopeless is the Christian presence as a catalyst of change for the better! Against this human perspective stands that of the Lord, who wants us to be Salt and Light (Mat. 5:13-16). Can this be right? Are we gaining any rewards in this race?

### *Praise-Thanks*

- We thank God that He has revealed to us Christ, the Only One Who can bring true peace, transforming men and women on the inside (Isaiah 9:6).

- We praise our Lord because He is the God “of all flesh” (Jeremiah 32:27) and is lovingly interested in the many problems in the world which scourge our societies.
- We thank God for leaving us the example of the compassion of Christ in every kind of need (Luke 7:13-14).
- We praise God because He continues to be our benefactor, even to those who reject Him.

### *Confession*

- We acknowledge that we only pray minimally for the problems of our local community and our leaders, even though the Lord has told us to pray for them (I Timothy 2:1-2).
- We admit that we are often not involved in the “*community*” problems of our area, because we are so busy with our own affairs and we do not consider social issues spiritual.
- We confess that we are not interested in current events on a world level because we are ‘absorbed’ in preaching the Gospel. We forget that the Christian is light and salt in the darkness of this world (Philippians 2:14-15) and that the Christian has a message of true peace to give to a world that is seeking peace in the wrong ways.

### *Requests*

- We pray that as believers and churches we will get involved in the struggle along with different agencies that promote peace and protection of people, on local, national, and international levels.
- Disaster in ecology has an economic effect. We want to pray for people who are suffering economically because of environmental deterioration; and that we will develop a deeper concern for millions who live in poverty.
- We ask God to guide the leaders of the nations to rule with discernment (I Kings 3:9), righteousness and fear of God, so as to serve the true needs of their peoples.
- We want to pray for non-Evangelical Christian leaders that they may discover the Truth and preach it to their people.

## SUNDAYS

**We run as churches to compete together in a common work**  
**“Master,” said John, “we saw a man driving out demons in Your name and we tried to stop him, because he is not one of us.” “Do not stop him,” Jesus said, “for whoever is not against you is for you.” (Luke 9:49-50)**

If anyone **competes** as an athlete, he does not receive the victor’s crown unless he competes according to the rules.( II Timothy 2:5)

**READING:** II Timothy 2:1-5

For some this can be surprising news, but one church’s race is not against other churches! This is not a beauty competition for mission organizations and leaders. If we have such a competitor’s spirit, it disqualifies us from these games! Are we on the

same team? Can the defense of one team play against the offense or the goalie of the same team? If we do not redefine who is on our own side, we might end up losing the cup. Do not forget the rules—without them nobody can win!

#### *Praise-Thanks*

- We praise God for every person who recognizes Christ as his personal Saviour and Lord, regardless of the church in which he is.
- We praise God for the “surprises” that we will have in Heaven, as we will see brothers and sisters from other churches and denominations.

#### *Confession*

- We ask forgiveness because often we become defenders of our own traditions and do not have the vision for the work of God outside the walls of our own community.
- We acknowledge that we have refused to accept the blessing and the work that some other church group does, because they do not have identical theological views with us and we have considered them “carnal.”

#### *Requests*

- We pray that there will be good and essential spiritual relationships among leaders of the different denominations.
- We pray that there will be a common vision for the work of God in our country and in the world.
- We ask God to grant us understanding that we belong to the same army and our common enemy is Satan, and not our brothers and sisters.

Note: In this text, we have used the New International Version of the Bible, © 1978 by New York Bible Society International.