



DAYS OF PRAYER + FASTING

Christ's Kingdom Builders 21 Days of Prayer and Fasting Guide!

Sometimes it seems there are times when God is trying to get our attention. What if God is trying to get your attention? What if God is calling your name? What if God is trying to help

you take a turn in life right now? In this 21 days of prayer and fasting, it is not only possible but probable that God will speak into your life and use this as a turning point.

This season of prayer and fasting will be aided and accompanied by several tools in this document, including: a Biblical guide to fasting, different fasting options, and a prayer guide for each of the 21 days that includes a central Biblical passage, a brief devotional thought, reflection questions, and a prayer.

We eagerly await what the Lord will do for us, in us and through us during these very special 21 days.

I keep asking that the God of our Lord Jesus Christ, the glorious Father, may give you the Spirit of wisdom and revelation, so that you may know Him better. I pray that the eyes of your heart may be enlightened in order that you may know the hope to which He has called you, the riches of His glorious inheritance in His holy people, and His incomparably great power for us who believe. - Ephesians 1:17-19a

Fasting Guide

What does the Bible teach about fasting?

Biblical fasting involves abstaining from eating (and/or drinking) for spiritual purposes.

In the Old Testament, Israel celebrated certain annual fasts, the most prominent being the Day of Atonement. There were also occasional fasts tied to specific historical events, sometimes individual and sometimes corporate. Here are a few of the occasions for fasting: at a time of grief (I Sam. 31:13; Nehemiah 1:4), at a time of repentance (I Sam 7:6; I Kings 21:27), as an expression of humility (Ezra 8:21; Psalm 69:10), and as an expression of a need for God's guidance and help. What all of these fasts share in common is that they were an expression of dependence on God.

Several New Testament passages give us insight about fasting.

Fasting teaches us to that God's Word nourishes us: Matthew 4:1-4 records the only example of Jesus fasting, just prior to His being tempted in the wilderness. He faced temptation with these words, "Man shall not live on bread alone, but on every word that proceeds out of the mouth of God." Jesus is quoting Deuteronomy 8:3-5 which talks about the 40 years Israel spent in the wilderness, depending daily on manna to sustain them. He says that God humbled them and let them be hungry in order to teach them to depend on God's Word to sustain them. By His example of fasting, Jesus reminds us that food alone can't sustain us. We need to be nourished by God's Word.

Fasting teaches us that doing God's will sustains us: John 4:31-35 records Jesus' encounter with the woman at the well. When the disciples return, they encourage Jesus to eat. He responds by saying, "I have food to eat that you know not of." Then He adds, "My food is to do the will of the Father." Again, Jesus reminds us that food alone is not enough. We are sustained by doing God's will.

Fasting teaches us that Jesus Himself sustains us: In John 6:48-50 Jesus says, "I am the bread of life. Your fathers ate the manna in the wilderness, and they died. This is the bread which comes down out of heaven, so that one may eat of it and not die." We see this pictured symbolically in the bread and the cup of the Lord's supper. Jesus is the source of eternal life. Fasting is feasting on Jesus.

Jesus assumed that fasting would be a part of His disciple's spiritual life. In Matthew 6:16-18, He says, "when you fast," not "if you fast." He warns us not to fast to impress people, but to be near to the heart of God.

What is the purpose of fasting?

Fasting is designed to intensify our dependence on God by weakening our dependence on food and other things. How does it do that?

Fasting reveals and heals our dependence on food (and other things) to fill the discomfort caused by low self-esteem, unfulfilling work, unloving relationships, uncontrollable circumstances, etc. It removes the false peace derived from the pleasure of eating.

Richard Foster says, "More than any other discipline, fasting reveals the things that control us. This is a wonderful benefit to the true disciple who longs to be transformed into the image of Jesus Christ. We cover up what is inside us with food and other good things, but in fasting these things surface. If pride controls us, it will be revealed almost immediately. David writes, "I humbled my soul with fasting" (Psalm 69:10). Anger, bitterness, jealousy, strife, fear—if they are within us, they will surface during fasting."

Fasting teaches us that we can go without getting what we want and survive. Fasting can free us from having to have what we want. Therefore, fasting can teach moderation or self-control, not only in relation to food, but in other areas as well. It teaches contentment. (1 Timothy 6:6)

Fasting expresses and deepens our hunger for God. Richard Foster says, "Fasting reminds us that we are sustained "by every word that proceeds from the mouth of God:" (Matt. 4:4). Food does not sustain us; God sustains us. In Christ, "All things hold together" (Colossians 1:17). Therefore, in experiences of fasting, we are abstaining from food or other activities and feasting on God's Word.

Fasting must always, first and foremost, center on God. It must be about Him.

Step 1: Clarify the purpose of your fast

Why are you fasting? Ask the Holy Spirit to clarify His leading and objectives for your prayer fast. This will enable you to pray more specifically and strategically. Fasting is God-led and God-initiated. That means that He fuels a desire to fast and pray. He loves it when we fast.

Step 2: Specify the kind of fast you will do

Pray about the kind of fast you should undertake. Jesus implied that all of His followers should fast. (Matthew 6:16-18; 9:14,15) For Him it was a matter of when believers would fast, not if they would do it. Before you fast, decide the following up front:

• How long you will fast - one meal, one day, one week, several weeks, certain days (beginners should start slowly, building up to longer fasts)?

- The type of fast God wants you to undertake - discussed in the *Types of Fasts* section below.
- What physical or social activities you will restrict
- How much time each day you will devote to prayer and God's Word

Making these commitments ahead of time will help you sustain your fast when physical temptations and life's pressures tempt you to abandon it.

Step 3: Prepare your heart, mind, and body for fasting

Fasting is not a spur-of-the-moment thing. It is planned. We must prepare. The very foundation of fasting and prayer is repentance. Un-confessed sin can hinder your prayers. There are several things you can do to prepare your heart

- Fasting requires reasonable precautions. Consult your physician first, especially if you take prescription medication or have a chronic ailment. Some persons should never fast without professional supervision.
- Do not rush into your fast. Prepare your body. Eat smaller meals before starting a fast. Avoid high fat and sugary foods. Eating raw fruit and vegetables prior to your fast is helpful. Physical preparation makes the drastic change in your eating routine a little easier so that you can turn your full attention to the Lord in prayer.
- Prepare your heart and mind: Remember that God is your Father and He loves you and is for you.
- Confess every sin that the Holy Spirit calls to your remembrance and accept God's forgiveness (1 John 1:9). Seek forgiveness from all whom you have offended, and forgive all who have hurt you (Mark 11:25; Luke 11:4; 17:3,4). Make restitution as the Holy Spirit leads you.
- Surrender your life fully to Jesus Christ (Romans 12:1, 2). Meditate on the attributes of God, His love, sovereignty, power, wisdom, faithfulness, grace, compassion, and others. (Psalm 48:9,10; 103:1-8, 11-13)
- Begin your time of fasting and prayer with an expectant heart. (Hebrews 11:6)
- Do not underestimate spiritual opposition. Satan sometimes intensifies the natural battle between body and spirit. (Galatians 5:16,17)
- Finally, and of deep importance, Jesus instructs us in Matthew to not let others know about your fasting. The strict details of your fast should not be something you constantly talk about to others. It should remain between you and God.

Types of Fasts

Now that we have explored the Old and New Testament teaching and instruction on fasting, we can proceed to discuss specific kinds of fasts. Let us begin with the helpful words of Richard Foster in his classic, *Celebration of Discipline*: "As with all the Disciplines, a progression should be observed; it is wise to learn to walk well before we try to run."

Biblical fasting almost always concerns food. Since the purpose of fasting, as we saw above, is to focus on God, to humble ourselves and to remind ourselves that we are sustained by every word that proceeds from the mouth of God, then the task in fasting is connecting our "going without" to "hungering for God." This

takes time, focus and prayer in itself. Please do not expect to be an "expert" at fasting right away. Fasting is a discipline that can take a very long time to understand well. Also, do not let this fact deter you or intimidate you.

Fasting is not unlike a beautifully written masterpiece of literature. It is simple enough for a youth to understand and enjoy, and yet magnificently rich enough for the scholar to devote his/her entire life to.

Abstaining from certain types of foods (meat, sweets, etc.) - Daniel 10:3

This type is a good one for beginners to fasting or those with health needs and special or restrictive diets.

Choose to abstain from something like breads, sweets, sodas, coffee, or even red meat. Perhaps spend some time reading through Daniel's fast in Daniel chapter 1 and chapter 10. Stick to only fruits and vegetables like he did or something similar.

Determine the timing and duration of your fast and begin. You may choose to go without this specific type of food on only certain days like Fridays, or you may go without during the weekdays only or perhaps every day. Finally, choose the duration of your fast. This fast is 21 days (January 12 -February 1) but that does not mean you must go without for all of the 21 days. Determine the timing and duration ahead of time and stick to it. Rather, pray through it.

Abstaining from all food - Esther 4:16; Acts 9:9

This kind of fast is more difficult but can be broken up by timing and duration. This seems to be the most prevalent of the fasts we see in the Bible. It is also the most intimidating, but refuse to let it scare you. Fasting from all food is not scary if you determine beforehand when you will do so and for how long. Here are some ideas.

- Start slowly. Begin with fasting for only a part of a day (lunch, or lunch and dinner). Do this for one day a week, or perhaps three days a week. You determine the timing and duration.

Take a step of faith. Fasting is risky and involves our faith.

- Next, try fasting from food but not beverages. This means that according to your timing and duration, you would not eat any solid foods but only water, juices, smoothies, or perhaps simple soup broths.
- Do this for the first one or two weeks. Devote the time that you normally would eat to Scripture reading and prayer. Focus on Jesus' statements about food.
- Next, try a 24-hour fast. This means that you get up and eat a good breakfast and drink only water or juice until the following breakfast the next day. Set aside specific time, during normal meal times if possible, to pray and seek God.
- Finally, you may progress to a two or three day fast. For some, progression may lead to a multi-day, even multi-week fast. But remember the purpose of your fast.

Abstaining from entertainment - Daniel 6:18

The king's voluntary "fasting" from entertainment in the time of Daniel helps us further understand yet another type of fast. Fasting from entertainment can be particularly helpful and accessible to kids and teens.

Think of abstaining from television, ipods, video games, all reading except the Bible, music, texting, etc. for the duration of your fast. This can be a very powerful decision even as a supplement to food fasts.

Choosing your fasting plan is a very personal decision. We are all at different places in our walk with God and our spirituality should never be a cause for comparison or competition. There is nothing more "inherently spiritual" about one type of fast as opposed to another. Your personal fast should present a level of challenge to it, but know your body, know your options, and most importantly, seek God in prayer about

this and follow what the Holy Spirit leads you to do. It's also important to not let what you eat or do not eat become the focus of your fast. This is a time to disconnect enough with your regular patterns and habits in order to connect more closely to God.

Day 1

Ephesians 1:15-23 Personal

PREPARE YOUR HEART

Praise: God holds all knowledge and wisdom! Praise Him for being omniscient!

Confession: Consider moments where you have leaned on yourself or others before turning to God for answers. Ask forgiveness for not leaning on His wisdom and guidance.

Thanksgiving: Give thanks to God for being willing to generously share His wisdom with you when you ask (James 1:5) and through the Holy Spirit (Eph 1:17).

Encouragement to pray: Read Ephesians 1:15-23. Today, let's focus on verses 17 and 18. Throughout Scripture it is acknowledged that life is hard. We see that implied when Jesus looked on the crowds compassionately (Mark 6:34). We see it spoken outright even as early as the fall in Genesis 3 when God tells man and woman that the consequence of sin has brought hard work and pain. Paul prays over the believers in Ephesus that God would give them the Holy Spirit who brings with himself wisdom and knowledge of God. He prays that, not hoping God will send the Spirit of wisdom, but knowing that is what God does for the believer! In verse 18, Paul reminds us that the gift of the Holy Spirit's wisdom is that we "may know what is the hope to which he has called you." What a sweet promise to cling to as we face life with inevitable hard scenarios!

PRAYER FOCUS

Pray that you would seek the Holy Spirit's wisdom that is offered and that you would then know the hope that comes alongside it!

Example Prayer:

Dear God, you have offered yourself through the interaction of the Holy Spirit and I thank you for that! God help me to seek the wisdom the Spirit offers more intentionally. Forgive me for the moments I have relied on my own strength. Thank you that the hope you offer is attached to my calling as your child and not to my circumstances! Help me to act in Your wisdom and to rest in Your hope! (Pray for any specific scenario where you know you need to think and act with God's wisdom for guidance.) In the name of Jesus, I pray. Amen.

Day 2

Ephesians 1:15-23 Family and Church

PREPARE YOUR HEART

Praise: God designed us for community. Praise Him for the community that He has designed for you!

Confession: Confess the sin of pride in the moments it led you to be more judging of your community than grateful and loving. (Hebrews 10:24-25)

Thanksgiving: Consider some of the specific people in your community of believers that you can rely on and give thanks for their presence or specific ways they have encouraged you in the faith.

Encouragement to pray: Read Ephesians 1:15-23. In the preceding verses, Paul says that the people's hearing of the Truth, acceptance of the Gospel, belief, and sealing by the Holy Spirit all add to the praise of God's glory! (Ephesians 1:12-14) A community of believers adds to the praise of God!

As Paul continues the letter in verses 15-16, he encourages them by being thankful for them. He is thankful that they are adding to the praise of God! How encouraging to know that before they do anything for God, they are already adding to the praise of Him by accepting salvation, which is also true for us! When we look around at our church, do we look in gratitude at people who are adding to God's praise? Do we see people that are a part of God's plan for His name to be known and look in gratefulness for the diversity that is offering up praise?

PRAYER FOCUS

Pray in thankfulness for your church family and believing community.

Example Prayer:

God our Father, we thank you that you designed us for community. Help me to be grateful for the specific community that I am in here at Providence while also being thankful for all believers, because in belief, we are adding to the praise of Your name! Give me the strength to be someone who spurs others toward love and good works (Heb 10:24). Give me eyes to see the specific individuals who need encouragement (Heb 10:25). Help my gratitude to be sincere and lead me to pray for my church family as Paul modeled for us. (Consider praying for any specific people God brings to mind as you think of your church family.) In Jesus' name I pray. Amen.

Day 3

Ephesians 1:15-23 Your 4

PREPARE YOUR HEART

Praise: Consider the differences in your life before and after knowing the Lord. Praise God for His specific work in your life! (2 Corinthians 5:17)

Confession: Paul uses the phrase "the immeasurable greatness of his power." (Eph 1:19) Confess the times that you make little or take for granted God's power.

Thanksgiving: Give thanks for your own salvation, and then also give thanks that the Lord wishes for all people to know Him and come to repentance!

(2 Peter 3:9)

Encouragement to pray: Read Ephesians 1:15-23. When we have good news, we are excited to tell someone about it. How much more so, when we embrace the hope we know through our salvation and work of the Holy Spirit, should we be excited to share God's name and goodness?! When we consider the vision to reach our 4, let us use phrases like we see here in Ephesians to spur us to tell others more boldly about God. We see the Spirit give wisdom and knowledge (v. 17), a calling of hope (v 18), riches of inheritance (v. 18), and immeasurable power (v. 19). Let us grow in awareness of these promises both in idea and at work around us, and then let us share them with the people God puts in our path.

PRAYER FOCUS

Pray for God to reveal people to whom you can share about Him and then for boldness to follow through.

Example Prayer:

Dear God, when I see in Scripture all that you have promised to me as a believer, it is brings me great joy. I pray that you would help me to share with others out of a grateful heart! Give me a discerning eye for the people who need to hear about your name and your good news. Help me to be persistent in prayer for them and then boldly obedient to walk in relationship with them, sharing your Truth and your name along the way. In Jesus' name I pray. Amen.

Day 4

Ephesians 1:15-23 Our City

PREPARE YOUR HEART

Praise: Praise God for revealing Himself to the world through His Word, Holy Spirit, and creation (Romans 1:19-20).

Confession: Consider ways in which you underestimate, or fail to trust, God's presence and power at work in your life. Confess your desire to know and rely on Him more fully.

Thanksgiving: Consider the hope of the gospel. Thank God for forgiving your sins and giving you a heavenly inheritance. Be grateful that this message of hope was shared with you and is available to all people.

Encouragement to pray: Read Ephesians 1:15-23. Consider God's willingness to not only reveal Himself to the world but also to save those who trust in Jesus through faith. In these verses, Paul rejoices over the faith of the Ephesian believers while also reminding them that it is God who gives wisdom, provides strength, and offers hope to all people. Consider the people in your life that need to hear this hopeful message. Pray that God will expand your understanding of the grace

He has given you through Jesus and ask for opportunities to share this good news with the people in your life. Trust that God is at work in the lives of all people and rest in His sustaining strength.

PRAYER FOCUS

Pray that God will open the eyes, minds, and hearts of the people in Raleigh so that they see the present hope, eternal security, and daily strength offered to them by God through the gospel of Jesus Christ (Eph. 1:18-20).

Example Prayer:

Lord, thank you for making yourself known in the world. Help the people of Raleigh understand their need for forgiveness as well as the benefits that come from having a personal relationship with you. Father God, I believe that you give wisdom to those who ask for it. I ask that you help the people in my city to realize that their sin separates them from you but that Jesus lived, died, and rose again to repair that relationship. Thank you for the message of hope—the gospel. Prompt and motivate me to share this glorious good news and the difference you’ve made in my life with others. In Jesus’ name. Amen.

Day 5

Ephesians 1:15-23 Our Nation

PREPARE YOUR HEART

Praise: Praise God for being the One True God who rules with justice and reigns in power over all the earth (Psalm 96:1-6). He is the Creator, Sustainer, and Savior who alone deserves our worship.

Confession: Ask God to open your eyes to the lostness in the world and reveal areas in your heart where you have resisted contributing to the gospel going to all nations. Confess to God your desire to see all people saved.

Thanksgiving: Thank God that every inch of the globe is under His authority and, therefore, no one is outside the scope of His saving power. Be grateful that the gospel is spreading through various people and platforms across the world today.

Encouragement to pray: Read Ephesians 1:15-23. Reflect on the fact that God worked through His Son, Jesus, to offer hope to the world. Consider that Jesus lived on the earth as a man, died for sins He did not commit, rose from the dead after three days, and is currently seated in heaven at the right hand of God the Father. God exalted Jesus as supreme over all heaven and earth, which includes every ruler, authority, power, and dominion (Col. 1:16-17). As the exalted One, Jesus is able to reach and rescue all people. Take time to consider the barriers that keep you from praying, giving, or going to the nations with the gospel (Matt. 28:18-20). Ask God to expand your understanding of His supremacy over the earth, direct you to ways you can contribute to getting the gospel to the nations, and strengthen you for the task ahead.

PRAYER FOCUS

Pray that the nations will come to understand that Jesus is the Lord of lords and King of kings (Rev. 17:14). Plead with God to turn their hearts away from false gods and lead them to call on Jesus by faith in order that they will be saved.

Example Prayer:

Father in heaven, You are the One True God. All other gods are worthless in comparison. Help people all around the world to turn from worshiping false gods and turn to worshiping You alone. Thank you that Jesus is supreme over all creation. He is the Creator, Sustainer, and Savior over all. Release the nations from the bondage of idol worship. Reach them with the message of hope that Jesus alone saves. Rescue the lost by the power of Your might. Lord, I trust that You bring people out of darkness and lead them into your glorious light (Col 1:12-14). Help me to be faithful to participate in Your global rescue mission by seeking out opportunities to pray, give, and go to all nations with the gospel. In Jesus' name. Amen.

Day 6

Ephesians 1:15-23 To walk in wisdom and revelation

PREPARE YOUR HEART

Psalms 43:3: Send me your light and your faithful care, let them lead me; let them bring me to your holy mountain, to the place where you dwell.

Ephesians 1:17-18: I keep asking that the God of our Lord Jesus Christ, the glorious Father, may he give you the Spirit of wisdom and revelation, so that you may know him better. I pray also that the eyes of your heart may be enlightened in order that you may know the hope to which he has called you, the riches of his glorious inheritance in the saints, and the incomparably great power for us who believe.

Lord Jesus, Open our eyes!

James, the leader of the Jerusalem church, reminds us that when we lack wisdom, we should ask it of God who gives generously. In Psalm 43, the Psalmists confesses that God's light and God's truth are the only reliable leaders, for they bring us to where He is.

God of Heaven, Lead us with your light and truth!

As we continue our way into this consecrated season of prayer and fasting, we are coming together as a church praying that God would lead us, open our eyes, and give us the moving power of His Spirit in a fresh and awakening way. This prayer is a heart-felt, guttural, straining desire to return to True Reality, God's light and life. We know that Christ Jesus has resurrected our souls by His grace and that light and life, along with wisdom and revelation, come only from Him.

reflect:

- Where have you sensed God giving you the gift of wisdom and discernment in your life?
- James tells us that God will give us wisdom if we ask. Will you ask Him for wisdom? He promises to give it to you when you ask.

Example prayer:

Lord, open my eyes to see You more clearly and my ears to hear anything You desire to speak. I pray for a Spirit of wisdom and revelation that I might know Jesus more deeply and have a profound understanding of the hope that is in His heart for me. Help me to hear your voice and a stranger I will not follow. Please help me live to

please you and be Christ Centered and not World Centered or Self Centered. In Jesus' name I pray. Amen

Day 7. Colossians 1:9-14 Personal

PREPARE YOUR HEART

Praise: Praise God for the spiritual wisdom and understanding He has given you that led you to faith in Christ and continues to mature you as you walk with Jesus daily (Proverbs 2:6-8).

Confession: Confess to God areas in your life where you are trusting in your own strength, wisdom, and understanding. Ask God to help you acknowledge and trust in Him (Prov. 3:5-8).

Thanksgiving: Consider the role of the Bible, Holy Spirit, and faith family in your life. Thank God that your salvation and spiritual growth are not solely dependent upon you. Be grateful that God has given you commands, condolences, convictions, and community to help guide you along your faith journey.

Encouragement to pray: In this letter, Paul conveys his joy that the Colossian believers are faithfully loving God and one another. Yet he goes on to tell them that he is continuing to pray that they will excel further in their understanding of God's will, obedience to Christ, and service to others. Paul acknowledges that once a person trusts in Jesus by grace through faith, they are saved and sealed with the Holy Spirit (Eph. 1:13-14). He also proclaims that there is still work to be done in spreading this good news to others (Col. 1:28). Paul encourages these Christians to continually pursue spiritual growth and fruitfulness. Yes, God saves us but He has also prepared good works for us to walk in (Eph. 2:1-10). Consider the various means God has provided for you to be stirred up to love and good deeds (Heb. 10:24).

PRAYER FOCUS

Pray that God will continue to fill you with the knowledge of His will for your life, conform you into the image of Christ, and use your life as a fruitful witness of the difference the gospel makes in a person.

Example Prayer:

Mighty God, I believe that all wisdom comes from You. Thank you for giving me access to your Word in my language, sealing me with the promised Holy Spirit, and placing me within the body of Christ—the church. Help me to pursue spiritual growth. Motivate me to love and serve others. Open my mouth so that I speak of You often. Give me a desire to make Jesus the Lord of my life and faithfully obey His commands. Thank you God, for loving me first. Help me to be strengthened with Your might so that I will endure well, be patient when necessary, and joyfully proclaim the gospel through my words and deeds. In Jesus' name I pray. Amen.