

X R D S

WEEK OF PRAYER & FASTING

Guidelines

Introduction

This year we have a Prayer & Fasting week leading up to our Easter Sunday Service. This dedicated week is meant as a time of empowerment and encouragement for us. We warmly invite you to meet and encounter God together through Prayer & Fasting.

We are really excited to go through this week with you. Prayer serves several purposes. For instance, it helps us express ourselves to God (Phil. 4:6), it can build us up spiritually (Col. 4:12) and enables God's will to be done in our lives (Luke 11:1-13; Acts 10:31). God desires His house to be a house of prayer (Matt. 21:13). What's sometimes overlooked is that prayer also serves our own spiritual formation. That is, prayer transforms us to look more like Christ and how we pray forms us as Christians. When the first Church was formed right after Pentecost, the apostles committed themselves continually to prayer (Acts 2:42).

Sadly, many of us find it difficult to pray regularly — and that's okay to acknowledge. Life is full, our minds are busy, and sometimes we're just not sure where to start. But the beautiful truth is that prayer doesn't require perfection — it just requires presence.

In a world that values freedom and individuality, we often approach prayer when we feel like it — and God welcomes us in those moments. But there is also something deeply life-giving about building **simple rhythms of prayer** into our day.

This isn't a new idea. Since the earliest days of the Church, followers of Jesus have made time to stop and pray — not out of pressure, but to realign their hearts. The *Didache*, an early Christian teaching from the first or second century, encouraged believers to pray the Lord's Prayer three times a day. Why? Because the **Lord's Prayer grounds us in God's kingdom, His provision, His forgiveness, and His protection.**

When you don't know what to pray, **Jesus has already given you the words.**

Historically, church bells have been used to signal a time for prayer and worship. We do not have church bells, but through our modern means of communication we would like to invite all of our community to pray and fast together this week. Because we live in different places we have written down some ideas for prayer and fasting that you can use. You can pray this at any time that suits you, but as a staff community we are committing to praying this in the morning. So, even though you might be alone, you know that our community is praying with you!

How to Use This Devotional Guide

— Read —

Read your Bible, using either the daily devotional we've prepared for you or your own. As you read, pay attention to how God uses prayer to bring His plans to fulfillment.

— Pray —

Pray about whatever is on your heart and mind. If you're using a daily devotional, you'll also find prayer points there to guide you.

— Fast —

In this guidelines, there are some suggestions for fasting that will help you remind yourself of your dependence on God. Participation is voluntary and you are completely free to arrange a fast of your own choice as well. Perhaps you could consider asking the Lord what you could give to Him this week? The main goal is to seek the Lord and His will for our lives and to make space for Him.

— Give —

You might also take time to consider giving and sharing with others. When we temporarily say no to ourselves in order to bless someone else, we reflect the heart of Christ, who gave Himself for us.

“Lord, Teach Us to Pray”

Luke 11:1 (NIV):

“One day Jesus was praying in a certain place. When He finished, one of His disciples said to him, ‘Lord, teach us to pray, just as John taught his disciples.’”

Why Prayer?

We believe that prayer is not a performance. It's not a duty.

It's not about saying the “right” words.

Prayer is relationship. It's how we connect with God, align our hearts with His, and become more aware of His presence in our everyday lives.

The disciples didn't ask, “Teach us to lead” or “Teach us to heal.”

They asked:

“Lord, teach us to pray.”

Because when we learn to pray, we learn to live with God at the center.

Scripture Reflection

Philippians 4:6–7 (NIV):

“Do not be anxious about anything, but in every situation, by prayer and petition, with thanksgiving, present your requests to God.

And the peace of God, which transcends all understanding, will guard your hearts and your minds in Christ Jesus.”

Colossians 4:2 (NIV):

“Devote yourselves to prayer, being watchful and thankful.”

Matthew 21:13 (NIV):

“‘It is written,’ he said to them, ‘My house will be called a house of prayer, but you are making it a den of robbers.’”

Romans 8:26 (NIV):

“In the same way, the Spirit helps us in our weakness. We do not know what we ought to pray for, but the Spirit himself intercedes for us through wordless groans.”

Mark 9:29 (NIV):

“He replied, ‘This kind can come out only by prayer and fasting.’”

What Does Prayer Do?

- Draws us close to the Father
- Transforms us to reflect Jesus
- Changes circumstances and changes us
- Aligns our hearts with God’s will, not just our wants
- Invites the Spirit to pray with us when we don’t know how

You are never praying alone. Even when your words fail, the Spirit carries your heart to the Father.

Why do we fast?

Fasting is a spiritual discipline — a way of humbling ourselves before God and making space to encounter Him more deeply. It’s not about earning God’s favor or punishing our bodies — it’s about focusing our hearts and aligning our desires with His.

1. **Fasting Helps Us Focus**

In the middle of all life's noise, fasting quiets our souls so we can hear God more clearly and center our attention on His Kingdom.

Matthew 6:33 (NIV):

“But seek first his kingdom and his righteousness, and all these things will be given to you as well.”

2. **Fasting Helps Us Surrender**

When we deny ourselves something we regularly rely on (like food or media), we learn again that our lives are fully dependent on God.

Matthew 4:4 (NIV):

“Jesus answered, ‘It is written: Man shall not live on bread alone, but on every word that comes from the mouth of God.’”

3. **Fasting Makes Space for God**

By stepping away from daily comforts or distractions, we open space in our hearts for greater awareness of God's presence.

James 4:8 (NIV):

“Come near to God and he will come near to you. Wash your hands, you sinners, and purify your hearts, you double-minded.”

4. **Fasting Is a Way of Intercession**

In Scripture, people fasted to seek God's intervention — for direction, healing, protection, and power.

Ezra 8:23 (NIV):

“So we fasted and petitioned our God about this, and he answered our prayer.”

Acts 13:2 (NIV):

“While they were worshiping the Lord and fasting, the Holy Spirit said, ‘Set apart for me Barnabas and Saul for the work to which I have called them.’”

5. **Fasting Trains Our Hearts**

Fasting isn't just physical; it's deeply spiritual. It cultivates discipline, shapes our desires, and forms us into people who are led by the Spirit, not by appetite.

Psalms 35:13 (NIV):

“Yet when they were ill, I put on sackcloth and humbled myself with fasting. When my prayers returned to me unanswered...”

Types of Fasting in Scripture

1. Food Fasting

This is the most common form in the Bible.

A. Full Fast – Abstaining from food, drinking only water or liquids.

"After fasting forty days and forty nights, he was hungry." - Matthew 4:2 (NIV)

B. Partial Fast – Limiting your food choices (like the Daniel Fast).

"At that time I, Daniel, mourned for three weeks. I ate no choice food; no meat or wine touched my lips; and I used no lotions at all until the three weeks were over." - Daniel 10:2–3 (NIV)

C. Single Meal Fast – Skipping breakfast or lunch to pray.

"So we fasted and petitioned our God about this, and he answered our prayer." - Ezra 8:23 (NIV)

2. Digital/Entertainment Fast

Letting go of social media, TV, gaming, or non-essential screen time.

"Be still, and know that I am God; I will be exalted among the nations, I will be exalted in the earth." - Psalm 46:10 (NIV)

In a world filled with constant noise, this fast opens space for God's whisper.

3. Relational/Verbal Fast

Choosing silence and solitude for a time to reflect, pray, and listen.

"Even fools are thought wise if they keep silent, and discerning if they hold their tongues." - Proverbs 17:28 (NIV)

Sometimes the loudest place is inside our own heads — fasting from words helps us listen better.

4. Time Fast

Giving up something that consumes your time — hobbies, sleeping in, podcasts — to devote more time to prayer, worship, or Scripture.

"Very early in the morning, while it was still dark, Jesus got up, left the house and went off to a solitary place, where he prayed." - Mark 1:35 (NIV)

You don't need hours — just intentional moments.

5. Generosity Fast (Soul Fasting)

Fasting from selfishness by intentionally serving or giving to others.

*"Is not this the kind of fasting I have chosen:
to loose the chains of injustice*

*and untie the cords of the yoke,
to set the oppressed free
and break every yoke?
Is it not to share your food with the hungry
and to provide the poor wanderer with shelter—
when you see the naked, to clothe them,
and not to turn away from your own flesh and blood?” - Isaiah 58:6–7 (NIV)*

This fast blesses others and brings joy back to your soul.

Final Thought:

We fast not to get God’s attention, but to give Him ours.