



DEVOTIONAL GUIDE



JOURNEYCHURCH

Welcome to 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.

At the end of this special season, I would love to hear your story of how this 21 days has impacted your spiritual journey. Send me a message at pastor@journeynv.com

When you pray, don't babble on and on as the Gentiles do. They think their prayers are answered merely by repeating their words again and again. Don't be like them, for your Father knows exactly what you need even before you ask him! Pray like this: "Our Father in heaven, may your name be kept holy. May your Kingdom come soon. May your will be done on earth, as it is in heaven. Give us today the food we need, and forgive us our sins, as we have forgiven those who sin against us. And don't let us yield to temptation, but rescue us from the evil one"

"And when you fast, don't make it obvious, as the hypocrites do, for they try to look miserable and disheveled so people will admire them for their fasting. I tell you the truth, that is the only reward they will ever get. But when you fast, comb your hair and wash your face. Then no one will notice that you are fasting, except your Father, who knows what you do in private. And your Father, who sees everything, will reward you."

~ Matthew 6:5-18 ~

fasting guide

what does the Bible teach about fasting?

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

There are many examples in Scripture where followers of God made special commitments to a time of fasting.

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's 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.

One author 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. (I 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. You may even consider consulting 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 that 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 His 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 instructed his followers in Matthew to not let others know about their fasting. The strict details of your fast should not be something you constantly talk about to others. It should remain between you and God. This is not to say that we must not mention to anyone that we are fasting, but that we should be mindful of it, and mindful of our hearts. Remember why we are fasting.

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. 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 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, tablets, video games, all reading except the Bible or Christian literature, 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 journey 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 and sacrifice to it, but know your body, know your options, and most importantly, seek God in prayer about this and follow what the His 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 trap particularly common to those committing to a 'Daniel's Fast'. We should be mindful of not obsessing over the details, or fall into making it about our diet and body. This is a time to disconnect enough with your regular patterns and habits in order to connect more closely to God.

If you do not choose to fast, or no matter what kind of fast you choose, seek God with us in prayer.

day 9: to be saved and delivered

Psalm 18:2: The Lord is my rock, my fortress and my deliverer; my God is my rock, in whom I take refuge, my shield and the horn of my salvation, my stronghold.

Psalm 16:11: You make known to me the path of life; You will fill me with joy in your presence, with eternal pleasures at your right hand.

Acts 16:31 (AMP): Believe in and on the Lord Jesus Christ—that is, give yourself up to Him, take yourself out of your own keeping and entrust yourself into His keeping, and you will be saved; [and this applies both to] you and your household as well

To hide his identity, let's call him 'Andrew.' He was 17 years old, grew up in a strong Christian home, and was clearly loved and cared for. He was close to graduating from high school, but the past few months had taken a turn for the worse.

Andrew was a smart kid, but academics were not his forte. His friends joked, "Andrew will work at McDonald's for his entire life." They thought it was funny. Andrew laughed about it on the outside, but grew more broken inside. He began to think that if that's the way people thought of him, then he would live into it.

Early in the school year, he began to use drugs and drink alcohol with his friends. He kept it a secret from his family; he thought they would not understand. In the dark, his addictions grew, moving to harder drugs. His family tried every method to get through to him. They tried punishment, and Andrew would rebel more. They tried loving him in every way they could think of, and he rebelled more. His family was exhausted and confused. They came to a place where they finally realized that the situation was out of their hands - placing it entirely in God's hands.

His family cannot explain it, nor can he really, but when things seemed most hopeless, God saved him. Andrew struggles to put it into words, but somehow, somehow, he felt the love of God, and that altered the course of his life. It was almost as if a light when on inside him; the blinders were off. He was saved and delivered into the love of God. His family counts all of their failed attempts and gives God the glory for doing in Andrew what human beings could not.

reflect:

- Who does your heart ache for God to deliver and save?
- Will you trust that God will do the impossible in their lives?
- In this painful and confusing time, will you trust God to be your rock? Take refuge in Him.

prayer:

Father, I pray for the hurting and lost of this world. I ask that you do what only you can in the life of _____ (insert name). Be their Rock, their Redeemer. Use me in effective ways to show your love. Enter into the hearts of those far from you. Be their Savior; deliver them into a transforming relationship with you. I pray for any loved ones by name who do not know you or have fallen away from you. I ask you to reveal yourself to them as the awesome God that you are. I pray a hedge of protection around my family from all deception, temptation, and any plans of the enemy that would thwart the good plans you have for them.

journal

day 11: to be healed and reconciled

Psalm 107:20: He sent out his word and healed them; he rescued them from the grave.

Psalm 147:3: He heals the brokenhearted and binds up their wounds.

Malachi 4:6: He will turn the hearts of the parents to their children, and the hearts of the children to their parents; or else I will come and strike the land with total destruction.

The Scripture says in Matthew 4:1, “Jesus was led up by the Holy Spirit into the wilderness to be tempted by the devil.” It was the Holy Spirit that placed Jesus in that desert for that particular time. There are no mistakes in God’s plan. There is no plan B. We only know His complete plan for our lives as we look backward. A.W. Tozer said, “To the child of God, there is no such thing as an accident. Accidents may indeed appear to befall him and misfortune stalk his way; but these evils will be so in appearance only and will seem evil only because we cannot read the secret script of God’s hidden providence.”

Our whole perspective of life changes when we find ourselves facing overwhelming temptation, tragedy, or any hard situation that needs real healing or reconciliation.

I have been there; we all have been there in one sense or another. The Lord occasionally does the same with all of us, testing our faith, leading us into hardship, teaching us wisdom, showing us His ways, changing our course on this journey called life, calling us back to Himself—in the process healing us spiritually and sometimes physically. Our first reaction is usually anger, panic, and a sense of ‘why is this happening to me if you love me so much, Lord?’ But remember that deeper secret of the Christian life: “When we are in a difficult place, the Lord has placed us there, for reasons known for now only to Himself.”

The writer, Mackintosh, in referring to the Israelites leaving Egypt comments, “the sea was before them, Pharaoh’s army behind them, and mountains around them. And in all this, be it observed, permitted and ordered of God.” We are where we are today because God permitted it. As someone has said, “Nothing gets to the child of God unless it passes through His Hands first.”

Sometimes, circumstances beyond our control can push us off the thin wire we walk on in this thing called life. It could be the ringing of a phone, a knock on the door, a text, an email. We fall immediately into worry and fear that separates us from God, from our friends, our spouses, etc. How can we not worry or fear when our outflow exceeds our income, when a loved one is diagnosed with cancer, when layoffs occur at the company and our name is on the list, when our child is hurt or even killed, or our spouse wants to walk out. What is our hope? Where do we look for guidance in times like that?

We must pray to the One who has control over everything. We must ask Him to do what only He can do. And, we must consult the Scriptures for guidance and hope. Remember these men and women:

Hagar, a single mom, was forced into a desert with her boy where they nearly died of thirst. Joseph, desiring to be used of God, was seized, stripped, sold, and imprisoned in Egypt. David, anointed by Samuel, was pursued by Saul’s army. Most of the Lord’s disciples, who followed the Lord’s command to evangelize the world, died horrible deaths. The Lord Himself, fulfilling the Father’s will, was nailed on a cross until dead.

prayer for your spiritual family

day 12: to receive a fresh outpouring of God's Spirit

Psalm 51:2: Wash away all my iniquity and cleanse me from my sin.

Psalm 51:7: Cleanse me with hyssop, and I will be clean; wash me, and I will be whiter than snow.

Mark 2:22: But new wine must be put into new wine skins.

Acts 2:38: On the day of Pentecost all the believers were meeting together in one place. Suddenly, there was a sound from heaven like the roaring of a mighty windstorm, and it filled the house where they were sitting. Then, what looked like flames or tongues of fire appeared and settled on each of them. And everyone present was filled with the Holy Spirit and began speaking in other languages, as the Holy Spirit gave them this ability.

It seems for many believers a major disconnect occurs between the heart and mind. That being said, a fresh outpouring of God's Spirit is greatly connected to our conscious awareness of His indwelling. John's gospel states clearly the sending of the Holy Spirit, 'the Comforter,' for encounter not only with us but to dwell (live His life) in us. We must be aware of His presence more than our sin.

Romans 8:5: For those who live according to the flesh set their minds on the things of the flesh, but those who live according to the Spirit, the things of the Spirit. For to be carnally minded is death, but to be spiritually minded is life and peace.

Jesus having become sin for us dealt the death blow to sin's hold on us. Now the removal of the residue of sin's power is no less than Christ's promise to us.

Romans 6:11: Likewise you also, reckon yourselves to be dead indeed to sin, but alive to God in Christ Jesus our Lord.

There are many word pictures or descriptions of the Holy Spirit; one is water. Notice the request from Psalm 51 is for 'another' to wash, cleanse, and purify us.

The very work of the Spirit invokes the idea of cleansing or purifying by literally being the 'Living Water' flowing in power from within. Also, Ephesians speaks of Christ and His bride "that He might sanctify and cleanse her with the washing of water by the word." The living water and living word are ever present to do their work; we simply must say "yes" to His will and way in us and through us!

The new wine skins spoken of in Mark can refer to fresh governing or new governing of our lives. When the new spiritual 'mind-set' being the awareness of Christ's promise is fixed, fresh outpouring, 'New Wine' will follow. When new wine comes, 'times of refreshing' in the Spirit of the Lord will overcome and overtake us with breakthrough in all aspects of our lives and those we influence... as it did on the Day of Pentecost and throughout the book of Acts. Jesus started the church the way He wanted it; now He wants the church the way He started it! He wants us saturated with fresh outpouring!

reflect:

- Do you need a fresh awareness of the Holy Spirit's presence in your life?
- Will you ask Him to fill you to overflowing?

prayer:

Lord, I pray for times of refreshing as Your Word and Holy Spirit's presence cleanse and renew me. I pray that I will be spiritually-minded and that I will say yes to Your way and will through me. Thank you for Your faithfulness to me! I pray that my spiritual family will receive a fresh outpouring of Your Spirit! Fill us with your Spirit to overflowing!

journal

prayer for our community

day 14: to be a habitation for God's presence

Psalm 100:3: Know that the Lord is God. It is He who made us, and we are His; we are His people, the sheep of His pasture.

Psalm 95:7-8: For He is our God and we are the people of His pasture, the flock under His care. Today, if only you would hear His voice, "Do not harden your hearts as you did at Meribah, as you did that day at Massah in the wilderness."

1 Timothy 2:8: Therefore I want the men everywhere to pray, lifting up holy hands without anger or disputing.

Matthew 13:58: And He did not do many miracles there because of their lack of faith.

How Matthew 13:58 breaks my heart, because I so desire that God be active in my community! Therefore, I must pray.

Several times in scripture we see God looking for a person who will stand in the gap for a people, a nation, or the land. He desires to come with blessing, healing, and salvation and is looking for someone, or a group of someones, to agree with Him by paving the way for His coming in prayer.

The Biblical record reveals the Lord descended with His presence on Nineveh, Antioch, Ephesus, and Jerusalem as well as other cities.

The thought resounds: why not here; why not now? It is possible! God wants it for our community!

There is not a formula to accomplish this, but there are some things we should give ourselves to as we invite Him to come. Christian researchers have discovered communities that are experiencing God's abiding presence have several things in common.

- Persevering spiritual leadership
- United efforts of prayer
- Social reconciliation, compassion, evangelism
- Public Power Encounters
- Spiritual Mapping/Diagnostic Research: what's going on in your community, what are the desperate needs?

So, let's get to it! Pray for the spiritual leaders of our community regularly. Attend community-wide prayer events where Christians gather to pray for the community. Pray for social reconciliation, compassion efforts to rise up and be successful. Join in public displays of your faith with other believers. Lastly, ask God to give wisdom about transforming the underlying issues in our community where powers and principalities derive their power.

reflect:

- How will you play a role in bringing God's presence to our community?
- In what areas can you play a leadership role in providing united efforts of prayer with Christ followers, fighting for social justice, or showing Christ's compassion to our community?

prayer:

Heavenly Father, I lift up my neighbors before You Lord, asking for Your presence to fill the atmosphere so that they will hear You speak, and see You work in their lives. Right now I pray for all of my neighbors by name, and I ask, God, that You will reveal Yourself to each one of them.

day 16: to be cleansed of sin

Psalm 25:18: Look on my affliction and my distress and take away all my sins.

Nehemiah 1:6, 8-9: I confess the sins we Israelite's, including myself and my father's house, have committed against you. We have acted very wickedly toward you. Remember the instruction you gave your servant Moses, saying, 'If you are unfaithful, I will scatter you among the nations, but if you return to me and obey my commands, then even if your exiled people are at the farthest horizon, I will gather them from there and bring them to the place I have chosen as a dwelling for my Name.'

In a meeting of diverse Christian leaders someone said, "the church in our city needs to repent." One response to the statement was, "what do we need to repent for?" Then the individual asking the question went on to talk about all the good things the church in that city was doing and finished by trying to make the case that there was not a need for repentance and the seeking of forgiveness from God, but rather the favor of God was resting on the city.

1 John 1:8-10 says, "if we say that we have no sin, we are deceiving ourselves and the truth is not in us. If we confess our sins, He is faithful and righteous to forgive us our sins and to cleanse us from all unrighteousness. If we say that we have not sinned, we make Him a liar and His word is not in us."

The scriptures reveal the sinfulness of cities such as Sodom, Gomorrah, Nineveh, and other cities too. Those that repented and turned to God were blessed and those that did not, well, some of them do not even exist anymore.

God loves to take a sinful city and turn it into a revival center. He did just that in Antioch, Ephesus, Jerusalem, Nineveh, and more recently in Cali Columbia, Fiji, Guatemala, Uganda, Brazil, and hopefully very soon in our own community.

How does it happen that an entire community or city repents to the extent that it gets God's attention and a transformation begins to occur? It begins by individuals getting honest with God, confessing their sin, and crying out to Him for forgiveness and freedom.

The real question is not, can it happen in our community, but will you allow it to happen in you? Let's be honest before God about those things in our heart. Confess our sins to Him and repent!

reflect:

- Imagine what our community would look like if a true transformation occurred among Christ followers. What are some things that would look different?
- Will you pray for the revival to begin in you?

prayer:

Holy God, I understand that a city or region cannot receive Your blessing if it is built on sin and bloodshed. That type of foundation causes the people to labor and gain nothing. Lord, we humbly ask Your mercy and for Your forgiveness to be poured out in the community we live in.

I also name the specific sins that I am aware of, such as injustices or covenant breaking, and I repent of them. I ask that You use me in my community wherever you desire so that You are glorified and seen in our midst.

day 17: to experience revival

Psalm 86:6: Will you not revive us again, that your people may rejoice in you?

Psalm 80:18-19: Then we will not turn away from you; revive us, and we will call on your name. Restore us, Lord God Almighty; make your face shine on us, that we may be saved.

It is pointed out that 2 Chronicles 7:14 is addressed specifically to Israel. That is true. But surely the passage shows God's heart for any people, any land.

What does God want from us? First, we must humble ourselves. We must admit that God is God and we are not. We must submit to God and come to Him in brokenness and repentance.

2 Chronicles 7:14: If my people, who are called by my name, will humble themselves and pray and seek my face and turn from their wicked ways, then will I hear from heaven and will forgive their sin and will heal their land.

Second, we must pray and seek God's face. No revival or awakening comes without prayer. Extensive prayer. Fervent prayer. Corporate prayer. Continual prayer.

It is worth noting that the prayer here is focused on seeking God's face and not God's hand. We are seeking God for Himself and not for what He gives us. We are locked in on God's glory, not on our need.

Third, we must turn from our wicked ways. God wants obedience, not religious ceremony. We cannot just say the words of repentance and pray the prayers of repentance. We must do the deeds of repentance and obey God in every part of life.

If we do these three things, then God promises to respond in three ways. First, He will hear us. He will hear those prayers. Second, He will forgive our sin. He will remove our sin as far as the east is from the west. And third, God will heal our land. He will pour out His favor and blessing upon us.

In 1861, Abraham Lincoln had just been elected President. The nation was tottering on the brink of war. There was cruel slavery in the land. The President faced widespread opposition and hostility. He issued a proclamation for our country, a proclamation which expresses the spirit of this passage.

"Whereas a joint committee of both houses of Congress has waited on the President of the United States and requested him to recommend a day of public humiliation, prayer and fasting to be observed by the people of the United States with religious solemnities, and the offering of fervent supplications to Almighty God for the safety and welfare of these states, his blessing on their arms, and a speedy restoration of peace. And whereas it is fit and becoming in all people at all times to acknowledge and revere the supreme government of God, to bow in humble submission to his chastisement, to confess and deplore their sins and transgression, in the full conviction that the fear of the Lord is the beginning of wisdom, and to pray with all fervency and contrition for the pardon of their offenses and for a blessing upon their present and prospective action. Therefore I, Abraham Lincoln, President of the United States, do appoint the last Thursday in September next as a day of humiliation, prayer and fasting, for all the people of the nation. And I do earnestly recommend to all the people, and especially to all ministers and teachers of religion of all denominations, and to all heads of families, to observe and keep that day, according to their several creeds and modes of worship, in all humility, and with all religious solemnity, to the end that the united prayer of the nation may ascend to the Throne of Grace, and bring down plentiful blessings upon our country."

day 18: to uphold righteousness and justice

Psalm 89:14: Righteousness and justice are the foundation of your throne; love and faithfulness go before you.

Matthew 6:33: But seek first his kingdom and his righteousness, and all these things will be given to you as well.

Did you know that statistics say that there are more slaves in the world today than at any other point in history? I found it hard to believe too. How can that be true? In the progressive post-abolition culture that we live in, how can there be over 27 million slaves worldwide? And how could Human Trafficking be such a hot topic in America today? Surely slavery doesn't happen here in America? But it does. And the reason is because there is heartbreaking injustice in the world.

As followers of Jesus, God makes it clear that we are to take a stand against injustice and fight for those who do not have the ability to fight for themselves. "Learn to do right; seek justice. Defend the oppressed. Take up the cause of the fatherless; plead the case of the widow." (Isaiah 1:17 NIV)

When I compare this command to the statistics of injustices like human trafficking, poverty, homelessness, domestic abuse, and so many others, I begin to feel helpless. How do we even begin to act justly when injustice seems to be taking over? Where do we start?

The best place that we can start is where many great Biblical leaders before us have started. With prayer. Look to the examples of men like Moses, Ezra, and Nehemiah who turned first to God and pleaded for His guidance and intervention. These men saw God change the attitudes of kings and rulers to move in ways that were beyond what they had imagined. The

rulers of their day who were once set against God allowed a nation to be freed from slavery, a temple to be rebuilt by an exiled people, and a city wall to be built up in only 52 days. Each of these men were guided in their work by the One who has a passion for those under unjust oppression.

There is an overwhelming amount of work to be done to solve the injustices in our world today. So where do we begin to stem the tide of heartbreak? The best place, the only place to start, is on our knees asking God to give us His wisdom and discernment as we work to uphold justice in our circles of influence. Don't hesitate to ask boldly for Him to move the hearts of those with greater influence as well – our leaders, politicians, and media. Our call is to uphold righteousness and justice in the world around us, but God, just like the leaders whose stories are recorded in the Bible, God does not leave us alone in that task.

reflect:

- What injustices cause your heart to break?
- Where is God giving you influence to fight injustice?

prayer:

God, Your Word shows that You care deeply for those that are suffering under injustice. Thank You for Your father heart that upholds the oppressed. I ask that You would be with our leaders and work through them as You have so many times throughout history. Give them a passion to establish just laws and the wise discernment they need to solve issues. Where there is a lack of passion, move in their hearts to create an urgency to uphold justice. Give me a fire to stand for those who cannot stand for themselves. Show me how I can work to influence those around me, and move in my own community to show Your love and compassion. May Your Kingdom come even now!

day 20: to be filled with God's glory

Psalm 22:27-28: All the ends of the earth will remember and turn to the Lord, and all the families of the nations will bow down before him, for dominion belongs to the Lord and he rules over the nations.

Habakkuk 2:14: For the earth will be filled with the knowledge of the glory of the Lord as the waters cover the sea.

At a time when Israel was rebellious, immoral, and indifferent towards God, Moses prayed, “Lord, show me Your glory!” God was quick to respond to this prayer. And Moses saw with his own eyes a portion of the glory of God. But he also heard the voice of God declaring His glory:

God defined His glory by describing His nature. “I am the Lord, God! I am compassionate, merciful, loving and forgiving. And I am perfectly just and will not excuse the guilty.”

“Yahweh! The Lord God! The God of compassion and mercy! I am slow to anger and filled with unfailing love and faithfulness. I lavish unfailing love to a thousand generations. I forgive iniquity, rebellion, and sin. But I do not excuse the guilty. I lay the sins of the parents upon their children and grandchildren; the entire family is affected—even children in the third and fourth generations.” Exodus 34:6-7

So when we pray for God's glory to come, we are praying for His nature to overwhelm our nature. We are seeking His nature to drive out the influence of sin nature, demonic nature, or any influence in a region or culture that is counter to Him.

This hour for us is not unlike the time when Moses prayed this great prayer. We, too, are at time when our nation and the world have never been so contentious with God. The name of Jesus stirs deep resentment in many people. Holiness is rare. Morality is in rapid decline. And the church of Jesus Christ is in a battle for its existence. In America, 3,500-4,000 churches a year close their doors. Churches lose 2.7 million people a year to nominalism or secularism. And 1,500 pastors a month are leaving the ministry. (Barna stats)

Moses could have prayed, “God meet our needs.” But this circumstance demanded so much more than “meet our needs.” He prayed, “Show me Your glory!”

We are in a desperate place today. We join our hearts in intercession to pray, “God, show us Your glory!” Overwhelm the numbness of our hearts with Your fire. Revive me with Your presence. Show Your glory in the church. Show us Your glory in America and all over the world.

“Father God, Show us Your Glory!”

reflect:

- Will you begin to pray, “Lord, show us Your glory” so that the world will see and know Him?
- What does it look like to be the ‘salt and light’ in the work place, school, or neighborhood you live in?

prayer:

Sovereign God, I pray that the believers in our community would be a city set on a hill and ‘salt and light’ to the world. I ask that we would influence other nations with righteousness. I pray You give me Your perspective on reaching this world with the Love of Jesus. Lord, instill in me a passion to join You in the mission of pursuing people to know You so that You are glorified among all nations and peoples. May I hunger and thirst after You and desire that for all people.

journal

day 21: to continue to seek God first

Psalm 9:10: Those who know your name trust in You, for You, Lord, have never forsaken those who seek You.

Jeremiah 29:13: You will seek me and find me when you seek me with all your heart.

1 Chronicles 29:13: Now devote your heart and soul to seeking the Lord your God.

Colossians 3:2: Set your minds on things above, not on earthly things.

I remember when I first met my wife and was interested in her. I looked for opportunities to run into her. I deliberately sought out ways I could have a conversation with her. I was curious about her and wanted to learn more about her, and I confess that I chased after her. We laugh about it now because I was so determined to get to know her, and she was so resistant to dating a Canadian. But it worked. We will be celebrated our 15th wedding anniversary this past year.

For the last 21 days, we have been chasing after God as we pray and fast. We have deliberately chosen to focus on Him and seek His presence. We have deliberately chosen to take time to read His Word and listen to His voice. For some of us, we can honestly say we didn't really 'hear' from God in a profound way during this time. For others, this has been an amazing time of growth, and we have felt His guidance and direction about something we were seeking. Regardless of what we have learned through this time or if we have 'cheated' on something we were going to fast from, these past 21 days have been crucial to us because we have obeyed God's command to seek His presence. It is always a beautiful thing when we chase after God and we put Him first because we desire to know Him more. And He promises us that when we seek Him, He will be found.

As we conclude our 21 days of prayer and fasting, it is important to ask, "Now what?" How can you remain committed to seeking Him? Very simply, decide to love God and seek Him. That's right, decide. Look for opportunities to spend time with Him and to learn from Him. Daily. Decide to chase

after Him and not the things of this life that quickly distract us from Him. Daily. Give Him your whole heart. Daily. Look for Him in each day, through people, circumstances, the Bible, and creation. Daily. It will take intention, effort, desire, and time. But it will be so worth it as your relationship with Him grows, develops, and you fall more and more in love with Him.

Hebrews 11:6 says that God will reward those who earnestly seek Him. Will you continue to earnestly seek after the God of this universe who loves you completely and desires to walk with you daily? The reward will be great because God is great!

reflect:

- How will you continue to pray daily and seek God through Scripture now that our 21 days of prayer and fasting are ending?
- Will you pray daily for a hunger and a thirst to chase after God and seek His presence?
- What will you commit to intentionally doing so that you are seeking God daily?
- Please pray for the worship service this week-end. Pray that this special time of prayer and fasting will accumulate into a beautiful time of worship, and then communion together as we kick off our Spring small groups.

prayer:

God, thank You for these last 21 days of focusing on You. Thank You for the promise that You will be found when I seek You. Thank you that You don't hide from me but that You constantly draw me near to You. Please put a hunger and a thirst in my life for You Lord. You are so beautiful. So amazing. So forgiving. So good. And I am deciding to chase after You with all of my heart from this day on. Daily. Lord, may I put You first and seek Your face. Daily.

I love you, Jesus. And I want to love and know You more. Amen.

Chains be broken
Lives be healed
Eyes be opened
Christ is revealed

I have decided
I have resolved
To wait upon You, Lord
My rock and redeemer
Shield and reward
I'll wait upon You, Lord

As surely as the sun will rise
You'll come to us
Certain as the dawn appears

You'll come
Let Your glory fall as You respond to us
Spirit rain
Flood into our thirsty hearts again
You'll come, You'll come

We are not shaken
We are not moved
We wait upon You, Lord
Mighty deliverer
Triumph and truth
We wait upon You, Lord

As surely as the sun will rise
You'll come to us
Certain as Your word endures

You'll come
Let Your glory fall as You respond to us
Spirit rain
Flood into our thirsty hearts again
You'll come, You'll come

Chains be broken
Lives be healed
Eyes be opened
Christ is revealed