

21-DAY FAST

Devotion Guide and Instructions

Day 1

Return to Me “Even now,” declares the LORD, “return to me with all your heart, with fasting and weeping and mourning.” Joel 2:12, NIV

If we look at the kind of fasting that took place in the Old Testament, it would be easy to assume that the reason for fasting is to gain forgiveness. In the book of Joel, the Israelites had wandered far from God, and their sinfulness had resulted in famine and pestilence in the land.

Through the prophet Joel, God called them to repentance, ordering them to declare a sacrificial fast, which along with mourning and weeping, would show God the sincerity of their repentance.

In return the prophet said that perhaps God would “turn and have pity and leave behind a blessing” (verse 14, NIV). Such a fast of repentance is seen in the Old Testament time and again, because under the Old Covenant, man had to rely on his works and sacrifices to avert the wrath of God. But under the New Covenant, we don’t have to fast for forgiveness. Every wrong we have done and will do was forgiven at the cross, and when we accept Christ, we live under the New Covenant of grace and forgiveness!

First Thessalonians 5:9 tells us that “God did not appoint us to suffer wrath but to receive salvation through our Lord Jesus Christ” (NIV). So then, why do we, as people under the New Covenant, devote ourselves to fasting and prayer?

We don’t have to fast for forgiveness. Every wrong we have done and will do was forgiven at the cross.

As we walk with God, there are times that we feel far from Him or disconnected. Joel’s words resonate with us, even if we live in a context of grace: “return to me with all your heart.” There are times we realize that though we have chosen to follow Jesus, the flame of our love for Him has grown cold.

Your time spent in prayer each day of the fast can result in a new richness, a rewarding connection with the Father. No matter where you are on your journey with Jesus, you can always take a step closer toward Him.

I believe the power of fasting as it relates to prayer is the spiritual atomic bomb that our Lord has given us to destroy the strongholds of evil and usher in a great revival and spiritual harvest around the world. —Bill Bright

Bible Reading Plan: Genesis 7

Prayer Focus: As we begin this time of prayer and fasting, let’s turn our hearts toward God. Make a commitment to seek Him daily. Pray that your love for Christ will be increased and your passion for Him will be reignited over the next twenty-one days.

Day 2

Tune In

My sheep hear My voice, and I know them, and they follow Me. —John 10:27

Have you ever tried to tune in a radio station only to be frustrated by finding static rather than music? And when you fiddled with the dial again, suddenly you hear a clear signal. The fact is that clear signal always existed on the airwaves. The difference is that now you have adjusted your tuner to the right frequency.

In our hectic lives, there are so many signals bombarding our senses that it can become difficult to distinguish God's voice from the deafening static noise of life. Fasting enables us to tune out the world's distractions and tune in to God. As we fast, we deny our flesh. When we deny our flesh, we become more in tune to the Holy Spirit and can hear God's voice more clearly. If you truly listen for God's voice, you will hear it. And when you hear it, your faith will increase.

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If you desire to tune out the static of life and really tune into the voice of God, come to Him first and foremost with ears willing to listen and a heart ready to obey what He says (Psalm 34:18; Isaiah 66:2). The more we practice being in His presence, the clearer and more recognizable His voice becomes. Fasting is more important, more important perhaps than many of us have supposed.... When exercised with a pure heart and a right motive, fasting may provide us with a key to unlock doors where others may have failed; a window opening up new horizons in the unseen world, a spiritual weapon of God's provision, mighty to the pulling down of strongholds. —Arthur Wallis

Bible Reading: Genesis 8

Prayer Focus: In this time of fasting, what is your mind tuned to? What distractions do you need to remove so that you can focus on God? Prepare your heart to hear the voice of God, and ask Him to help you remove distractions that keep you from focusing on Him and hearing His voice clearly.

Day 3

Fasting Removes Unbelief

Jesus rebuked the demon, and it came out of him; and the child was cured from that very hour. Then the disciples came to Jesus privately and said, "Why could we not cast it out?" So Jesus said to them, "Because of your unbelief; for assuredly, I say to you, if you have faith as a mustard seed, you will say to this mountain, 'Move from here to there,' and it will move; and nothing will be impossible for you. However, this kind does not go out except by prayer and fasting."

—Matthew 17:18–21

When we pray and fast, we don't do so to change God or His will; by praying and fasting, we are the ones changed. Coming into alignment with God helps us curb our doubts and fears. When we pray and fast, the thing that leaves—the thing that goes out—is our unbelief. It is when we have faith to believe that we can pray with confidence and know that "nothing will be impossible."

When we pray and fast, we don't do so to change God or His will; by praying and fasting, we are the ones changed. Ask God to strengthen your heart to fully believe Him and His Word. It is okay to recognize and acknowledge if you struggle with unbelief. That's the first step in allowing God to strengthen your faith and bring you into alignment with His plan for your life. Beware in your prayers, above everything else, of limiting God, not only by unbelief, but by fancying that you know what He can do.

Expect... "above all that we ask or think." —Andrew Murray

Bible Reading Plan: Psalm 1-2

Prayer Focus: What do you need faith to believe for? Align yourself with God's Word and will during this fast.

Release your unbelief. Pray with confidence, knowing "nothing will be impossible" for you.

FASTING TIP

On the third day of your fast, you may experience a headache, flu-like achiness, intense sugar or carb cravings, slight nausea, or fatigue. This is a normal response to detoxification, so make sure you allow yourself some time to rest and keep your fluid intake high. The fourth day is usually much better physically, so hang in there!

Day 4

Agreement with the Will of God

Can two walk together, unless they are agreed? Amos 3:3

In the heart of every believer is the desire to walk closely with God. We know that He, too, desires a close relationship with each one of us. A key to having a strong level of spiritual intimacy with God is living in agreement with His will for your life.

In Genesis 5:22, we read of Enoch and see that his life modeled a long journey, walking consistently with God, for it says, "Enoch walked with God three hundred years." Enoch lived a powerful life. He was a man who walked in agreement with God's will and lived a life pleasing to God (Hebrews 11:5).

The level of our agreement with God will determine the degree of closeness in our walk with Him.

It is one thing to know God's will for our lives; it's another to live in agreement with His will. In order to enjoy the best life that God has for us, we must first understand that God does not change, but we sometimes must. Let's earnestly seek to know and agree with God's will. The level of our agreement with God will determine the degree of closeness in our walk with Him. I believe firmly that the moment our hearts are emptied of pride and selfishness and ambition and everything that is contrary to God's law, the Holy Spirit will fill every corner of our hearts. But if we are full of pride and conceit and ambition and the world, there is no room for the Spirit of God.

We must be emptied before we can be filled. —D.L. Moody

Bible Reading Plan: Proverbs 1

Prayer Focus: Pray today that you can walk in agreement with God and enjoy the life He desires you to have in Christ.

Day 5

When Grace Comes Down

For the law was given through Moses; grace and truth came through Jesus Christ. John 1:17

Have you ever wondered what it would be like to have a personal visit with God? What would He say about the state of humanity? about religion? about our propensity toward sin? There is no need to wonder about what God is like or would say, because to know Him, we have only to look at Jesus. In Jesus we have received grace, but there is even something more we have received: truth.

The kind of truth John spoke of in today's scripture is not a list of laws and rules such as were given to Moses. Make no mistake—the revelation of God through the word of the Law was glorious. When Moses came down from Mount Sinai after receiving the ten commandments, his face shone so brightly with the glory of God that he had to wear a veil (Exodus 34:33-35). But the word of the Law cannot compare with the word of life that has been revealed through Jesus Christ!

In John 1:18 we learn that no one, not even Moses, has ever seen God. But Jesus has not only seen God—He is God. The truth that John was speaking about is a clear and unveiled vision of the true nature of God.

It is from a state of grace, not legalism, that we will find real and lasting transformation.

Looking at God through the lens of legalism and religion is like looking at Him through a veil. Only when we see Him through Jesus Christ can we truly get a glimpse into His heart. It is from a state of grace, not legalism, that we will find real and lasting transformation (2 Corinthians 3:7-18).

I am not what I ought to be, I am not what I want to be, I am not what I hope to be in another world; but still I am not what I once used to be, and by the grace of God I am what I am. —John Newton

Bible Reading Plan: Genesis 9

Prayer Focus: Have you been looking at God through the veil of legalism and religion? In Jesus, we see the full revelation of the nature of God: His love and holiness, mercy and justice, compassion and power all perfectly and beautifully expressed. Pray that the Holy Spirit will help you see God through the eyes of grace and truth given to us in Jesus Christ.

Day 6

The Spirit Is Willing

And I know that nothing good lives in me, that is, in my sinful nature. I want to do what is right, but I can't. I want to do what is good, but I don't. I don't want to do what is wrong, but I do it anyway. But if I do what I don't want to do, I am not really the one doing wrong; it is sin living in me that does it. —Romans 7:18–20, NLT

There's an internal war that rages within each of us. Paul described this so well in Romans 7. Though we desire to do the right thing, we don't have the power to do so in our own efforts and we mess up.

The good news is that we don't have to rely on our own strength to make right decisions. We don't have to be dominated by our sinful nature and end up doing the things we don't want to do. But the only way we can live this kind of life is by yielding to the Holy Spirit and relying on the strength of Jesus Christ, not our own.

When we're facing struggles, we must rely on God's power alive within us through the Holy Spirit. When we are born again, the Holy Spirit resides in us and places in us the desire to do what is pleasing to God (Hebrews 10:16). The Holy Spirit always wants to do what is right and to uphold the perfect will of God, pleasing the Father in every way.

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It is our job to lay down our stubborn fleshly will and yield to the will of God. In that moment, the Holy Spirit will be there to help us. Let's learn to yield to and become totally reliant upon the Holy Spirit.

[Prayer] turns ordinary mortals into men of power. It brings power.

It brings fire. It brings rain. It brings life. It brings God. —Samuel Chadwick

Bible Reading Plan: Genesis 10

Prayer Focus: Are there areas in your life causing an internal struggle? Make a decision today to yield to the Holy Spirit and lean on His strength, not your own, and to overcome obstacles of sin and selfishness in your life. Surrender and release those areas to God, knowing He will help you.

Day 7

Fervent Prayer

The effective, fervent prayer of a righteous man avails much. —James 5:16

Fervency speaks to our level of intensity, passion, and persistence. Many times, we can lose our passion in prayer or stop praying for certain things altogether because we lose heart or give up. But God invites us to keep them before Him and trust Him for an answer in His time (Matthew 7:7–11).

The Old Testament prophet Elijah practiced a lifestyle of fervent, intense prayer and witnessed incredible miracles in his lifetime. In the book of Kings, the story is told of a woman whose only son became ill and died (1 Kings 17:17–24). When Elijah heard the news, he quickly took action and did what he knew best—he fervently cried out to God.

Elijah fully believed that God could bring the boy back to life, and he prayed not just once but three times that the boy's soul would return to him. He prayed fervently and repeatedly and he wasn't going to give up. This was the result: "Then the LORD heard the voice of Elijah; and the soul of the child came back to him, and he revived" (verse 22).

Many times, we can lose our passion in prayer or stop praying for certain things altogether because we lose heart or give up. But God invites us to keep them before Him and trust Him for an answer in His time.

Elijah's prayer was answered through his persistence and fervency. God hears your prayers as well and will bring an

answer in His perfect timing. But don't be discouraged or disheartened if the answer takes time to arrive or is not exactly what you expected. Commit to praying to God with passion and persistence, trusting the answer will come in God's perfect way at the perfect time.

We must never forget that the highest kind of prayer is never the making of requests. Prayer at its holiest moment is the entering into God, to a place of such blessed union as it makes miracles seem tame and remarkable answers to prayer appear something very far short of wonderful by comparison. —A. W. Tozer

Bible Reading Plan: Matthew 4

Prayer Focus: As you close out this first week, continue to pray fervently for the main areas of concern in your life. Trust God to bring an answer as you journal your thoughts and inspirations through this time.

Week Two of Your Fast

Entering week two of your fast can present a different level of challenge. Although you probably experienced a decrease in cravings after day three, you may now be experiencing a resurgence of those same cravings.

Right around this time, a metabolic shift takes place in your body. If you are consuming significantly less calories than you were before, your body naturally shifts to its own resources to find sufficient fuel. These hunger pangs you are feeling right now are basically your body asking, "Hey, what's up? Are you going to give me some more calories, or should I move on to the next available source?" That next source means reserves stored mostly in your fat cells and somewhat in your muscles.

During the second week it is so important to remind yourself why you are doing this. This is when we truly realize how weak we really are, how much we need God's strength and grace, and not only physically to keep us from eating. We need His grace to be more compassionate, slow to anger, less judgmental, more pliable, more forgiving, and more generous.

Over the next couple of days, if you stick to your fast, here's what will happen to your body:

1. Your metabolism will slow down. In other words, it will shift to a mode of operation where it requires less energy—or calories to function.
2. A cycle of internal consumption will begin to use your energy stores in the form of fat—and some muscle. To minimize muscle breakdown, drink two glasses of whey protein a day.
3. Because toxins that we consume and don't eliminate are stored mostly in fat, you will also hit a new level of detox as your body starts using up your fat reserves.

Hang in there! The best is yet to come.

Day 8

Hear Him

This is my dearly loved Son, who brings me great joy. Listen to him."... And when they looked up, Moses and Elijah were gone, and they saw only Jesus.

—Matthew 17:5, 8, NLT

On the Mount of Transfiguration three disciples had an experience that showed us the Father's plan for the New Covenant. Jesus took Peter, James, and John up to the top of a mountain where He was transfigured into His glorified state. Up until this point, the Jews had related to God through the Law—represented by Moses and the prophets, one being Elijah. Inspired by what he was seeing, Peter eagerly offered to erect three tabernacles—one each for Jesus, Moses, and Elijah. Then a loud voice from heaven was heard: "This is my dearly loved Son, who brings me great joy. Listen to him."

When the disciples looked up, they saw only Jesus. You cannot earn God's pleasure, but you can experience it to a greater degree as you follow Jesus Christ. On that mountain God made it clear that we will only discover His pleasure by following Jesus. God's grace is freely given to those who receive new life in Him. Sometimes, though, there are areas of our lives where we do not fully embrace God's grace. There may be circumstances or areas where we still try to earn our way to the Father.

You cannot earn God's pleasure, but you can experience it to a greater degree as you follow Jesus Christ. As you seek God today, ask Him for a greater revelation of Jesus in your heart. Then will you be reminded that you are a

beloved child of God. And that He finds pleasure in you. If heaven were by merit, it would never be heaven to me, for if I were in it I should say, "I am sure I am here by mistake; I am sure this is not my place; I have no claim to it." But if it be of grace and not of works, then we may walk into heaven with boldness. —Charles H. Spurgeon

Bible Reading Plan: Genesis 11

Prayer Focus: How does understanding the New Covenant of grace change the focus of your fast? As you pray and seek after God, let His be the loudest voice you hear.

FASTING TIPS

On day eight you might experience:

~ fatigue—let yourself have extra rest if you need it ~ achiness and a headache ~ irritability ~ fogginess

All of these symptoms are normal and will pass. Make sure you keep your water intake up. If you're eating fruits and vegetables that contain a lot of water, you may not have a desire to drink much water. However, keeping your water intake up will help you flush out the second round of toxins that your body is releasing and help relieve the symptoms more quickly.

Finally, more than ever this is the time you have to be vigilant about your spiritual focus. Great days are ahead, and you will be so glad you pushed through this day and didn't give up!

Day 9

Clean House

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. —Romans 8:5–6

Have you ever looked at the top of your refrigerator or in the deep recesses of your couch cushions and noticed the filth that has built up over time? Even though we might clean on a regular basis, there are times when we need to go...a little deeper. We realize that what appeared to be clean on the surface was in all actuality, quite filthy.

The same thing can happen spiritually. As we go about our daily lives, there are things that can build up over time. Even if we worship, pray, and read our Bible regularly, the different temptations, pressures, and cares of this world can build up quietly and end up consuming our lives. Without even realizing it, we can lose our peace, joy, and passion for the things of God. Our service to God, which used to fill us with life and excitement, becomes a tiresome duty that we must fulfill.

Fasting is the deep cleaning that helps us take our minds off of the things of this world and instead have a refreshed focus on the things of the Spirit. Fasting offers an incredibly effective way to get into the nooks and crannies of our souls and bring all those dusty old habits, broken mindsets, and rusty attitudes out into the light of God's truth.

Fasting is the deep cleaning that helps us take our mind off of the things of this world and instead have a refreshed focus on the things of the Spirit.

In fasting and prayer, our service to God returns to something we want to do rather than something we have to do. One of the reasons for fasting is to know what is in us.... In fasting it will come out. You will see it. And you will have to deal with it quickly or smother it again. —John Piper

Bible Reading Plan: Genesis 12

Prayer Focus: As you pray and fast today, ask God to show you any areas where you could use a refreshed spiritual focus. Pray as David did in Psalm 51:10–12 that God will cleanse your heart, renew your spirit, and restore the joy of your salvation. Pray with confidence, knowing that He wants to fill you with His life and peace.

Day 10

Unwavering Faith

But let him ask in faith, nothing wavering. James 1:6, KJV

What do you expect when you pray?

When we pray with earnest expectation, we are exercising our faith. The earnest prayer of righteous people produces powerful results (James 5:16, NLT), and the most earnest prayers come from us when we recognize our need for God.

There can be a natural tendency to shrink back when praying for the seemingly impossible, but we must remember that nothing is impossible with God (Luke 1:37). If we know the promises that God has given us, and understand His character and the principles by which He works, we can pray with confidence and trust Him for the answer.

The most earnest prayers come from us when we recognize our need for God.

What has caused you to waver in your expectation with God? James reminds us that faith and wavering are actually contradictory—James says “nothing wavering.” Know that God never wavers in His love for you. You can trust Him completely.

There is no way that Christians, in a private capacity, can do so much to promote the work of God and advance the kingdom of Christ as by prayer. —Jonathan Edwards

When we depend upon organizations, we get what organizations can do; when we depend upon education, we get what education can do; when we depend upon man, we get what man can do; but when we depend upon prayer, we get what God can do. —A. C. Dixon

Bible Reading Plan: Matthew 5

Prayer Focus: What are you trusting God for in this season? How can you line up your expectations with the Word of God when you pray? Find promises in His Word that answer your need and write them down today.

Day 11

Prayer and the Process

Seven times Elijah told him to go and look. Finally the seventh time, his servant told him, “I saw a little cloud about the size of a man’s hand rising from the sea.” Then Elijah shouted, “Hurry to Ahab and tell him, ‘Climb into your chariot and go back home. If you don’t hurry, the rain will stop you!’” 1 Kings 18:43–44, NLT

“How do I know God is going to say yes to my prayers?”

This is a common question many people have as they seek a confident prayer life. However, it’s important to recognize that prayer is not just about the answer; it’s also about glorifying God in the process of waiting for the answer. It is our responsibility to check our motives and believe God hears us.

We see an example of the process of prayer in this story of Elijah (1 Kings 18). Elijah climbed to the top of the mountain to pray for rain to come. As he waited for the rain, he continued to pray, believing God would answer. When he finally saw a small cloud, he told Ahab to get ready because the rain was coming. Elijah knew what to pray for, and God heard him the first time he prayed. But there was preparation that needed to take place in order for Elijah to receive the answer to his prayer.

Prayer is not just about the answer; it’s also about glorifying God in the process of waiting for the answer.

It is no mistake that God waited until Elijah had prayed seven times before He answered. In the Bible, seven represents completion. In this story, seven represents the completion of God’s process regarding Elijah’s prayer request. God does not want merely to answer our prayers; He wants to spend time with us to prepare us for the answer that will come. Many times we want to skip over the process involved in engaging God in prayer as we wait for our answer. But it is this very process that works maturity in us and prepares us for the answers our prayers bring (James 1:4). The reason why many fail in battle is because they wait until the hour of battle. The reason why others succeed is because they have gained their victory on their knees long before the battle came....

Anticipate your battles; fight them on your knees before temptation comes, and you will always have victory. —R. A. Torrey

Bible Reading Plan: Genesis 13

Prayer Focus: What prayers of yours are still awaiting an answer? Throughout this fast, thank God for His process at

work in you...and trust Him.

Day 12

Praying Boldly

And it came to pass, at the time of the offering of the evening sacrifice, that Elijah the prophet came near and said, "LORD God of Abraham, Isaac, and Israel, let it be known this day that You are God in Israel and I am Your servant." —1 Kings 18:36

The sacrifice referenced above was a declaration that Elijah was a servant of the Most High God. Elijah belonged to God, and he represented God to the people. However, Elijah's boldness was not a result of who he was; it was the result of knowing God!

As children of God under the New Covenant, we don't have to be timid or fearful when coming to God in prayer. We can approach Him boldly.

Let us then fearlessly and confidently and boldly draw near to the throne of grace (the throne of God's unmerited favor to us sinners), that we may receive mercy [for our failures] and find grace to help in good time for every need [appropriate help and well-timed help, coming just when we need it]. (Hebrews 4:16, AMP)

It's intimidating to think about taking a fearless, confident, bold attitude when coming before God in prayer. Yet this is exactly what we are admonished to do! God has already settled the issue of our access to Him, but we can be assured our access is not because of our own righteousness. It's because of what Jesus did on the cross.

We can come to the throne in such outrageous boldness because Jesus was outrageously righteous! When we pray, we come to God in the authority of Jesus' name, and we can be confident that we will find grace, mercy, and perfectly timed help.

Fasting is not an end of itself; it is a means by which we can worship the Lord and submit ourselves in humility to Him. We don't make God love us any more than He already does if we fast, or if we fast longer.

Fasting involves God in the problem. Then in the strength of God, victory is possible. —Elmer L. Towns

Bible Reading Plan: Genesis 14

Prayer Focus: Do you approach God with timidity or confidence? Seek God boldly today knowing you are fully forgiven and Jesus has made you righteous. When you approach God in prayer, seek a fresh revelation of who He is in your life.

Day 13

Cultivating Spiritual Hunger

Immediately the Spirit drove Him into the wilderness. And He was there in the wilderness forty days, tempted by Satan, and was with the wild beasts; and the angels ministered to Him. Mark 1:12–13

Even Jesus disconnected from the world to fast and pray. Matthew, Mark, and Luke tell of Jesus going to the wilderness for forty days and forty nights. They also describe other times when Jesus pulled away from the demands of the crowds, His ministry, and even His closest friends to pray.

There are times that we, too, need to pull away from the things of the world and focus on God. "The things of the world" can certainly include more than just food. In fact, in our world they are more likely television, movies, Facebook, Twitter, cell phones, and the Internet. None of these things are wrong in and of themselves, but they are avenues for a mental and spiritual crowd to gather around us and drown out the Holy Spirit's voice.

Fasting is a means of disconnecting from the distractions of daily life and consciously choosing to bring God into greater focus. Giving up physical nourishment is the first step in engaging that process. If you think about it, though, in day-to-day life we nourish our souls as well as our bodies. We do so through reading, talking, socializing, playing, and entertainment.

When our souls are full of those things, we often don't hunger for God. Fasting is a means of disconnecting from the distractions of daily life and consciously choosing to bring God into greater focus.

During this time of fasting, we are sure to feel physical hunger, but let's be intentional about cultivating spiritual hunger as well. Let's draw away from the crowd and lay aside for a season the activities we use to nourish our souls. Instead let's enter a state of spiritual hunger, a craving for righteousness. Jesus said that being spiritually hungry is a blessed state, because there we can be sure of being filled with food that truly satisfies our deepest needs (Matthew 5:6). Prayer is reaching out and after the unseen; fasting, letting go of all that is seen and temporal. Fasting helps express, deepens, confirms the resolution that we are ready to sacrifice anything, even ourselves, to attain what we seek for the kingdom of God. —Andrew Murray

Bible Reading Plan: Matthew 6

Prayer Focus: During this time, you will find that being still before the Lord will set you in a place of increased strength, peace, and hunger for God. Are you disconnected from things that nourish your body and soul? What do you need to deny yourself to make this a powerful time in your life?

Day 14

Alignment with Heaven

Thy kingdom come, Thy will be done in earth, as it is in heaven. —Matthew 6:10, KJV

We have all heard the phrase, “just like heaven on earth.” When Jesus taught His disciples how to pray in Matthew 6:9–13, He provided some insight into what “heaven on earth” might look like.

In reality, heaven is a place where God's will reigns supreme. If we want to have a taste of heaven on earth, then our prayer should be like Jesus': “Thy kingdom come, Thy will be done...” The purest motivation for our prayers is that God will be glorified and that His will would reign supreme in our lives, just as it does in heaven.

On a more personal level, we can pray that His will be unhindered in our own life. Rather than imposing His will upon us, God gives us the choice to surrender to it with trust and gladness. As we yield to the Lordship of Christ over every area of our lives, we come into agreement with Him. We experience alignment with heaven and position ourselves to taste a little bit of heaven here on earth.

The purest motivation for our prayers is that God will be glorified and that His will would reign supreme in our lives, just as it does in heaven.

God's will then become what we desire and the thing we most seek after. We enter into the incredible adventure of participating in God's plan to move His kingdom forward on the earth. This is where we find the most fulfilling and joyous life, but it all starts with one personal “yes, Lord” on our part. All that God is, and all that God has, is at the disposal of prayer.

Prayer can do anything that God can do, and as God can do everything, prayer is omnipotent. —R. A. Torrey

Our prayers lay the track down on which God's power can come. Like a mighty locomotive, His power is irresistible, but it cannot reach us without rails. —Watchman Nee

Bible Reading Plan: Genesis 15

Prayer Focus: What does God's will “on earth as it is in heaven” look like in your life? Do the desires of your heart line up with the will of God? As we seek God together, let's pray as Jesus taught us, “Thy kingdom come, Thy will be done.”

Questions Along the Way

“What if I stumble, what if I fall?”

“What if I mess up and eat something not on my plan?”

“What if I just can't go without something—like caffeine—as I had planned to?”

“Will God still honor my fast?”

I remember the time a few years ago when someone asked me if I had ever “messed up” on a fast. I had to laugh because, of course, the answer was a huge yes. It has actually taken me years of developing a lifestyle of fasting to build up to where I am now. Over time, fasting does get easier, but this is a spiritual activity where it's easy for condemnation

to try and take root. Don't let that happen! Choosing to start a fast is quite similar to setting goals in life. It is good for us to challenge ourselves and set the bar high. Each time I prepare for a fast, I set goals that are typically beyond what I did the last time, and they're always beyond what I know I can do in my own strength. When we set the bar high, sometimes the natural result is failure to meet the goal. But that should never stop us from trying to reach as high as we can. So what if you mess up? What should you do then? Proverbs 24:16 says, "For though a righteous man falls seven times, he rises again, but the wicked are brought down by calamity" (NIV).

This "fall down, get back up" idea has been a formative principle in my life in so many areas, and it's no different in the arena of devotion to God. What matters is not that we stumble, but that we get back up! True failure only occurs when we let adversity keep us down.

Maybe you have tried to participate in this fast but have found yourself stumbling along the way. I want to encourage you to try it again during this last week. Don't be discouraged by looking at the times you gave in to hunger or messed up. But be encouraged by this: when we draw near to God, He draws near to us (James 4:8). He wants to draw near to you, so keep it up! I am confident that you will be rewarded and blessed for your perseverance.

Day 15

The Spoken Word

When he had said this, Jesus called in a loud voice, "Lazarus, come out!" John 11:43, NIV

The story of Lazarus's death and resurrection reflects the power of Jesus' spoken word. Jesus was so in tune with the will of His Father that He already knew in His heart the miracle that was about to take place, but His words spoke the miracle into existence.

While prayer is our declaration of our dependence on God, our spoken words can be the manifestation of what's happening in our hearts. There is power in our spoken words, whether they are used to build up or tear down. It is important to keep our heart filled with the truth from God's Word so that our words will produce good fruit.

While prayer is our declaration of our dependence on God, our spoken words can be the manifestation of what's happening in our hearts.

As you seek God in prayer ask Him for discernment to know a need and the words to help someone today. Pray that your words would be encouraging, edifying, and aligned with the truth of God's Word. Building others up around us with our words allows us to be God's instrument to accomplish His good work. The key to praying with power is to become the kind of persons who do not use God for our ends but are utterly devoted to being used for His ends. —John Piper

I am persuaded that love and humility are the highest attainments in the school of Christ and the brightest evidences that He is indeed our Master. —John Newton

Bible Reading Plan: Genesis 16

Prayer Focus: As God continues to fill you through this season of prayer and fasting, He wants to take what is now in your heart and share it with others. How can you use the power of your spoken words to speak God's truth in the lives of others?

FASTING TIP

For many, week three feels like a breakthrough week! By now your body should be thoroughly detoxified, and if you successfully navigated that metabolic shift that happened in week two, you're likely to find yourself coasting until day twenty-one.

As your body has become used to less food, you are more than likely experiencing fewer hunger pangs.

Since your body has detoxified, you are most likely also experiencing less achiness and headaches. Because your body is not using as much energy to digest food, it can devote more energy into the restorative processes.

During this last week you may also find you are sleeping better too.

Spiritually speaking, this week can be really powerful as you find yourself in your Fast Zone and your mind has made the leap to focusing more on God.

Day 16

Taking Off the Grave Clothes

Jesus said to them, “Take off the grave clothes and let him go.”

—John 11:44, NIV

When it comes to the transforming power of God working in someone’s life, God often uses people to bring about divine life change. The story of Lazarus in John 11 illustrates how it was the power of Jesus’ prayer and spoken word that resurrected Lazarus from the dead, but the disciples played a role in this miracle too.

When it comes to the transforming power of God working in someone’s life, God often uses people to bring about divine life-change.

Lazarus was bound hand and foot with grave clothes, and his face had been wrapped with a cloth during his time in the tomb. When he arose from his death and came out of the tomb, Jesus called on the disciples to help in the transformation process. Jesus said to them, “Take off the grave clothes and let him go.” The disciples needed to help Lazarus. Likewise, we all have a part to play in the lives of those around us.

God has done some incredible things around us during this fast. Could it be that someone around you is still walking around in grave clothes? What do you need to help them let go of?

Talking to men for God is a great thing, but talking to God for men is greater still. —E. M. Bounds

True prayer is measured by weight—not by length. A single groan before God may have more fullness of prayer in it than a fine oration of great length. —Charles H. Spurgeon

Bible Reading Plan: Psalm 3-5

Prayer Focus: Who in your world is still walking around in grave clothes? Think about friends and family or those you know who may not know God. What part has God called you to play in the life change He wants to bring them?

Day 17

Humility

And when they had come to the multitude, a man came to Him, kneeling down to Him and saying, “Lord, have mercy on my son, for he is an epileptic and suffers severely; for he often falls into the fire and often into the water. So I brought him to Your disciples, but they could not cure him.” —Matthew 17:14–16

What a great example of humility: this man approached Jesus and knelt before Him in the midst of a crowd. As the father approached, he believed that Jesus would bring his son relief. But even in his belief, his approach was humble and submitted to what Christ would choose to do.

Looking further into the story, we find the father was also persistent and resisted taking offense. Though the disciples were not able to help him, he set aside his temporary disappointment in their failure and continued to seek after Jesus—the solution to his circumstance, the source of relief through his trial.

God is never late and His solution is always perfect! Being humble before God is realizing our need of Him, submitting to His will, pursuing Him, and being confident the outcome will occur in God’s perfect timing.

Be encouraged that approaching God with a heart of humility will always position you to find relief in Jesus. Don’t be ashamed to humble yourself before God, even in the presence of others. Though offenses and disappointments may come, continue in your pursuit of Jesus. You may not get relief right away but know this: God is never late and His solution is always perfect!

The higher a man is in grace, the lower he will be in his own esteem. —Charles H. Spurgeon

Bible Reading Plan: Genesis 17

Prayer Focus: Prayer is a posture of humility. Humble yourself before the Lord each day and bring your cares to Him.

He wants to meet you where you are and answer your every need. Pray, too, that God will help you with the disappointment and discouragement that we all face along the way. Is there discouragement in your heart today? Write it down and release it to our perfect God.

Day 18

Pray Instead

Don't fret or worry. Instead of worrying, pray. Let petitions and praises shape your worries into prayers, letting God know your concerns. Before you know it, a sense of God's wholeness, everything coming together for good, will come and settle you down. It's wonderful what happens when Christ displaces worry at the center of your life.

—Philippians 4:6–7, MSG

Worry seems inescapable in modern life. No doubt there is plenty to worry about: our kids, the economy, global warming, war, disease... Sometimes it might seem that worry has even replaced Jesus as the focal point of our lives. Jesus Himself admonished us several times not to worry. And the apostle Paul told us that there is an antidote to worry...prayer. Our timeless God owns the future. He knows exactly what is going to happen, and He promises to be with us every step of the journey.

When we worry about something, we are spending energy on it, wondering what might happen, rehearsing the “if onlys” and “what ifs” in our mind. Why not take that same energy and refocus it on prayer instead? When we worry, we are simply talking to ourselves about our fears, but when we pray, we are taking those fears to God. We can't control the future, but as Anne Graham Lotz said throughout her book *Fear Not Tomorrow, God Is Already There*, our timeless God owns the future. He knows exactly what is going to happen, and He promises to be with us every step of the journey.

As we are nearing a close to this season of prayer and fasting, let's heed Paul's words to “let petitions and praises shape your worries into prayers.” Then the peace of God will guard your heart.

Growing an unshakeable trust in God as you face your tomorrow is not about self-improvement or mastering your circumstances, but about God—who He is, what He does, and how we can trust Him. —Anne Graham Lotz

We have to pray with our eyes on God, not on the difficulties. —Oswald Chambers

Bible Reading Plan: Genesis 18

Prayer Focus: What consistently causes you to worry? Today, recapture each worried thought and send it to God as a prayer. See how dramatically your outlook improves when the peace of God is activated through prayer!

Day 19

Walking in the Power of the Holy Spirit

Then Jesus returned in the power of the Spirit to Galilee, and news of Him went out through all the surrounding region.

—Luke 4:14

After praying and fasting for forty days, Jesus returned to Galilee empowered to do all the Father had called Him to do. Jesus was so powerful in public because He was so prayerful in private.

To accomplish the assignments God has for our lives, we also need the power of the Holy Spirit working in and through us. God does not expect us to go through the challenges of life without this power.

Prayer and fasting bring us to the place where we can power up. Walking in the power of the Holy Spirit is living with a comprehension of the God-given strength and authority in our lives to walk out His will.

Jesus was so powerful in public because He was so prayerful in private.

Through prayer and fasting, God can prepare us for what lies ahead. We might not know what obstacles we're going to face, but we can know that God will be faithful to us. He will never leave us (Hebrews 13:5) and He will empower us to meet whatever challenges life may bring.

Every movement of God can be traced to a kneeling figure. —D. L. Moody

Bible Reading Plan: Matthew 7

Prayer Focus: Today as you worship God in prayer, let Him know that you refuse to go into the future without His power and that you want all the spiritual resources He has for you.

Day 20

A New Wineskin

And no one puts new wine into old wineskins. For the new wine would burst the wineskins, spilling the wine and ruining the skins. New wine must be stored in new

wineskins.

—Luke 5:37–38, NLT

Two things that do not mix are new wine and old wineskins. The reason is simple: old wineskins cannot grow and stretch to hold the new wine. The new wine God wants to fill you with is a picture of God's Spirit, and this wine is expansive. A container that is dead, dry, stiff, and shrinking cannot be trusted as a storehouse for God's valued treasure. Our vessels must be prepared for the fresh, dynamic, living presence of God, because everything we do will flow from that.

God's new wine always changes us by expanding our faith, enlarging our purpose, and bringing renewed vision.

This preparation comes through prayer and fasting, during which we produce a container that is ready for the new thing God wants to do. God's new wine always changes us by expanding our faith, enlarging our purpose, and bringing renewed vision.

God is not into old wineskins; it is up to us to shed them. As we seek Him in this season, let's shed the old wineskin and ask God to fully prepare our hearts for what's to come. God became man to turn creatures into sons; not simply to produce better men of the old kind but to produce a new kind of man. —C. S. Lewis

Bible Reading Plan: Genesis 19

Prayer Focus: What has caused you to shrink back in your expectation of what God wants to do in your life? Are you ready to be expanded beyond recognition? That's what God's new wine will do in and through you. Pray that the Lord will expand your life to glorify Him, giving you boldness to step out and be used by Him.

Day 21

What's Your Assignment?

Jesus, full of the Holy Spirit, returned from the Jordan and was led by the Spirit in the desert, where for forty days he was tempted by the devil. He ate nothing during those days, and at the end of them he was hungry.... Jesus returned to Galilee in the power of the Spirit, and news about him spread through the whole countryside. He taught in their synagogues, and everyone praised him. —Luke 4:1–2, 14–15, NIV

Fasting and prayer are essential to receiving a clear vision of God's specific path for our lives. Many times after a season of prayer and fasting we have a more defined understanding of the part we play in the body of Christ, as well as a greater sense of our particular spiritual gifting's (1 Corinthians 12).

Fasting and prayer are essential to receiving a clear vision of God's specific path for our lives.

We learn a lot from observing the circumstances surrounding the beginning of Jesus' public ministry (Luke 4).

Notice that He went into the desert "full of the Holy Spirit." However, He returned to Galilee "in the power of the Holy Spirit." Being full of the Spirit is to know God and His character; walking in the power of the Spirit is when we know that we have the God-given strength and authority in our lives to walk out His will.

The power of the Spirit is essential for us to accomplish the assignment God has for us. God could be leading you to fast so that you can receive His specific instructions for your life. He will empower you not just to know Him but to walk in His power to accomplish what He has called you to do. That's exciting!

A man can no more take in a supply of grace for the future than he can eat enough for the next six months, or take sufficient air into his lungs at one time to sustain life for a week. We must draw upon God's boundless store of grace from day to day, as we need it. —D.L. Moody

Bible Reading Plan: Genesis 20

Prayer Focus: Are there areas of your life that need more clarity? Are you walking in the power of the Spirit and living in God's purpose for your life? Write down those things God is speaking to you. As you conclude your fast, pray that God continually reveals His purpose and gives you ever-increasing clarity and strength to walk it out.

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