



LESS OF ~~ME~~
+ MORE OF HIM +

ANTIOCH CHURCH - 2021
21 DAYS OF PRAYER & FASTING

Fasting Guide

what does the Bible teach about fasting?

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

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

Several New Testament passages give us insight about fasting.

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

types of fasts

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

Biblical fasting almost always concerns food. Since the purpose of fasting, as we saw above, is to focus on God, to humble ourselves and to remind ourselves that we are sustained by every word that proceeds from the mouth of God, then the task in fasting is connecting our “going without” to “hungering for God.” This takes time, focus and prayer in itself. Please do not expect to be an “expert” at fasting right away. Fasting is a discipline that can take a very long time to understand well. Also, do not let this fact deter you or intimidate you.

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

abstaining from certain types of foods (meat, sweets, etc.) - Daniel 10:3 This type is a good one for beginners to fasting or those with health needs and special or restrictive diets.

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

Determine the timing and duration of your fast and begin. You may choose to go without this specific type of food on only certain days like Fridays, or you may go without during the weekdays only or perhaps every day. Finally, choose the duration of your fast. This fast is 21 days (January 11-31) but that does not mean you must go without for all of the 21 days. Determine the timing and duration ahead of time and stick to it. Rather, pray through it.

abstaining from all food - Esther 4:16; Acts 9:9 This kind of fast is more difficult but can be broken up by timing and duration. This seems to be the most prevalent of the fasts we see in the Bible. It is also the most intimidating, but refuse to let it scare you. Fasting from all food is not scary if you determine beforehand when you will do so and for how long. Here are some ideas.

- Start slowly. Begin with fasting for only a part of a day (lunch, or lunch and dinner). Do this for one day a week, or perhaps three days a week. You determine the timing and duration. Take a step of faith. Fasting is risky and involves our faith.
- Next, try fasting from food but not beverages. This means that according to your timing and duration, you would not eat any solid foods but only water, juices, smoothies, or perhaps simple soup broths.

- Do this for the first one or two weeks. Devote the time that you normally would eat to Scripture reading and prayer. Focus on Jesus' statements about food.
- Next, try a 24-hour fast. This means that you get up and eat a good breakfast and drink only water or juice until the following breakfast the next day. Set aside specific time, during normal meal times if possible, to pray and seek God.
- Finally, you may progress
- to a two or three day fast. For some, progression may lead to a multi-day, even multi-week fast. But remember the purpose of your fast.

abstaining from entertainment - Daniel 6:18

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

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

Choosing your fasting plan is a very personal decision. We are all at different places in our walk with God and our spirituality should never be a cause for comparison or competition. There is nothing more "inherently spiritual" about one type of fast as opposed to another. Your personal fast should present a level of challenge to it, but know your body, know your options, and most importantly, seek God in prayer about this and follow what the Holy Spirit leads you to do. It's also important to not let what you eat or do not eat become the focus of your fast. This is a time to disconnect enough with your regular patterns and habits in order to connect more closely to God.

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

Day 1, January 11th:

As we turn the page and our attention to a new year, the theme of Antioch Church's 21-day fast and prayer is **"Less of ME, More of HIM."**

The goal of the life of a Christ follower can be summed up in more of Jesus, less of me. When we say, "less of me," what we are really saying is, less of SELF. One of the greatest, if not the greatest, obstacles to maturing as a follower of Jesus is our own self-focus, it is not Satan, it is not the world, but self. SELF - this is seemingly promoted from every avenue of culture, a tactic the enemy uses to distract and deceive, and we must intentionally fix our eyes upon Jesus.

Over this 21-day fast, our prayer is that we shift our eyes from anything that may be distracting or keeping us from a deeper place in His presence. We need MORE of Jesus. **"He must become greater and greater..."**

Scripture- He **must** become greater and greater, and I must become less and less. John 3:30

Focus: "Turn your eyes upon Jesus
Look full in His wonderful face
And the things of earth will grow
strangely dim
In the light of His
glory and grace"

Journal:

By Pastor Ryan Slavens

Day 2, January 12th

I recently saw a statistic regarding the church that has had me thinking about what God is doing in His church. The statistic said that six months into the pandemic in 2020, 19% to 22% of Christians had not gone to church at all- digital, physical, or reopened. That is saying 1 of 5 churchgoers have stopped attending ALL forms of church in 2020. Now, we know that the church is more than just a building, but we also know scripture tells us not to forsake meeting together or joining together to worship Him. In these times of technology, we are so fortunate to have every opportunity at our fingertips to join with other believers in worship. What priority do we as Christ-followers give to being a part of the church body today? Of worshipping Him together in Spirit and in truth? Of being united in one voice and one purpose? If anything, this pandemic has revealed to us how important we believe it is to be part of the church body. Make no mistake, Christ is building His church. He is building a body of faithful believers who walk in the fear of the Lord and who put Him above all else. He is building a church that can not be shaken, that will not sink in tough and trying times, but will have a hunger for His word and the things of God and will proclaim the greatness of God!

Christ is actively and boldly building such a church that all the powers of hell will not conquer it. As we go through trials, like the pandemic and

the struggles of the last year, we know it is building and purifying our faith and the best is yet to come. We know that through Jesus we already have the victory and we are to press on. We are to be part of the church He is actively building and we must walk faithfully in that not being easily shaken or distracted, but knowing we must be united together as one church, seeking Him, so we may lead others to know Him.

Scripture- "Now I say to you that you are Peter (which means rock), and on upon this rock I will build my church, and all the powers of hell will not conquer it." **Matthew 16:18**

Focus: Thank you Jesus for the victory, and for building such a church with a foundation that is unshakeable that all the powers of hell will not conquer it. Thank you that we can take part in that victory!

Journal

By Jennifer Slavens

Day 3, January 13th

Surely goodness and mercy will follow me all the days of my life...

As a believer and follower of Christ this scripture is one that we can absolutely count on!

2021. what does it hold? What situation is going to appear in our lives? Will we get the job? Will we get that raise? Will we meet our spouse? Will healing come? Whatever questions we are facing in our life situations we can go back to this scripture and rest. Even if we are facing some trial...if we are following after Him, we know this scripture will hold true. God walks us through the fire sometime and how much better are we for that?

Of course, I don't know what you are personally facing right now and you have no idea what I'm facing either, but God does and I'm trusting Him and His word to not be void. God's word is life!

Scripture- Surely goodness and mercy will follow me all the days of my life...

Psalms 23:6

Focus: On God's goodness and mercy.

Journal

By Janet Seaton

Day 4, January 14th

Do you ever feel stuck spiritually? Maybe your life seems in a rut, and you have no idea how to grow. What can you do?

God has provided us with many spiritual disciplines to help us get closer to him, such as prayer and fasting.

In the Old Testament we find that God's people often fasted and prayed in times of repentance and in times of great distress, recognizing they needed the deliverance that only God could give.

Jehoshaphat did this when a group of nations threatened to conquer Judah. The opposing army was vast, and only a miracle could keep Judah safe. Jehoshaphat was learning that the nation needed to turn back to God (2 Chronicles 18-19). So the king declared a fast and led the people in prayer, saying, "Lord . . . we do not know what to do, but our eyes are on you." God then told the nation through a prophet that the battle was the Lord's and he would fight on their behalf.

As we humble ourselves before the Lord, God fights on our behalf in ways that we cannot even fathom. Powerful enemies self-destruct, and oppressive, unjust forces wither away. When we adopt habits of

following Christ, through God's power we can grow, serve, and praise the Lord again.

Scripture- "Alarmed, Jehoshaphat resolved to inquire of the Lord, and he proclaimed a fast for all Judah. The people of Judah came together to seek help from the Lord..." **2 Chronicles 20:3-4**

Focus: On seeking the Lord.

Journal

By: Pastor Kevin Seaton

Day 5, January 15th:

Walking in _____!

As I contemplated the emphasis of "less of me, more of him" my mind wandered to one of the most important attributes of God that many of us struggle to demonstrate. The truth is it is a necessity to our Life in Christ, "forgiveness"! When I stop to think about it, I realize the continual effects of forgiveness on my daily life. It's something I didn't deserve but I receive in abundance. So long ago Christ gave His all so that I might receive forgiveness of sin when I accepted Christ and then when I continually repent of my mistakes, rebellion, failures and out right sins.

Forgiveness is a daily gift I freely receive by God's grace. But as I read Matthew 6:14-15 I come to recognize how important it is for me to demonstrate forgiveness to receive it. The scripture states it clearly "If you forgive those who sin against you, your heavenly Father will forgive you. But if you refuse to forgive others, your Father will not forgive your sins." Wow step back, that is a hard pill to swallow. But it depends on how you look at it. A quote from TD Jakes states it pretty good "The first step to understand that forgiveness does not exonerate the perpetrator. Forgiveness liberates the victim. It's a gift you give yourself." That is the revelation that I've discovered for myself that forgiveness ends up being more important for me than the other

person. If I hold onto unforgiveness it is like planting a seed in my heart, that produces a harvest I really don't want. What things might that be? Things like bitterness, anger, hatred, vengeance, insecurity and so many other things. In essence we become a prisoner or slave to unforgiveness. In Ephesians 4:31-32(TPT) it says "Lay aside bitter words, temper tantrums, revenge, profanity, and insults. But instead be kind and affectionate toward one another. Has God graciously forgiven you?"

Then graciously forgive one another in the depths of Christ's love." To live the "more of Him" life I must continually live in a state of forgiveness. Forgiveness is a powerful tool that breaks captives free. Jonathan Lockwood Huie said it this way "Forgive others, not because they deserve forgiveness, but because you deserve Peace." As I demonstrate and live out the life of forgiveness I become a living testimony that demonstrates God's love to others and His abounding peace. Living a life of forgiveness is not for the weak of heart but for those that walk in the strength of the revelation of all that Christ did for them and in turn want to demonstrate this attribute to others. I end with Colossians 3:12-13 (TPT)

Read the 3 passages again Matthew 6:14-15, Ephesians 4:31-32, Colossians 3:12-13 Ask Him to give you strength to recognize and actively pursue the attribute of forgiveness towards any of these areas. Ask Him to help you develop a plan to forgive. Whether that is by way of letter, phone call or in person. If you don't know how to proceed, find Godly counsel and get their input and come up with a plan. End goal is that we walk in freedom, peace and forgiveness.

This image shows a blank sheet of white paper with horizontal ruling lines. The lines are evenly spaced and extend across the width of the page. There are no margins, text, or other markings on the paper.

By Lee Blake

Day 6, January 16th

My kiddos are getting old enough to be capable of baking a cake from a mix in a box all by themselves. It is amazing! When they combine the correct, good, intended ingredients (water, oil & eggs) with the mix, pop it in the oven then what comes out of the oven is a good, delicious cake.

If they go to bake a cake, instead of the intended ingredients they choose to combine banana peels and old newspaper with the mix, pop it in the oven then what comes out of the oven is trash! No one is interested in this type of cake.

When we apply this scripture, "Out of the abundance of the heart the mouth speaks" to our lives, the same is true. If we feed/fill our minds with trash, negative influences/friends, shows that are not above reproach then what comes out in our communication is negative and trash – doing good for no one! A selfish attitude comes to the surface. It becomes difficult to see hope.

On the flippy-flop, when we surround ourselves with good, encouraging friendships, fill our hearts and minds with the word of God then, we in turn spill out all that we've been hearing - bringing life to all that are around us. When we are full of Him, it comes naturally to think of others before our selves.

The prayer, "more of Him, less of us" becomes all the more important in relation to the scripture that teaches, "out of the abundance of the heart, the mouth speaks," When we have more of Him, we are full of Him – in our heart, our thoughts, and our attitudes. It makes a difference in how we speak to ourselves and those around us.

Scripture- Out of the Abundance of the Heart the Mouth Speaks
Matthew 12:34

Focus: Build up yourself and others, by continually praying for more of Him and less of yourself.

Journal

[illegible]

By Lori Fitzgerald

Day 7, January 17th

It was a crowded day on the shores of Lake Galilee. Jesus was teaching while surrounded by a multitude of people intrigued by His words. As the crowds grew, Jesus stepped onto a fishing boat near the water's edge owned by Simon Peter. Jesus took a seat and continued teaching. When he had finished teaching he asked Peter to row out to deeper waters and asked him to cast his fishing nets, promising a great catch. Having fished all night with nothing to show for it Peter agreed, reluctantly. They rowed out, cast their nets and to their amazement they instantly filled with fish that in turn filled their boat and the boat of their business partners who were near by! So much so that the boats began to sink.

Stunned by this miraculous haul, Peter hit his knees before Jesus in reverent fear. Peter and the others, James and John, were in awe of what they had just witnessed.

Jesus, who was always living on purpose and on mission, told these men they would no longer be known as mere fishermen but instead they would soon be transformed into men who would capture the hearts of people with the good news of Jesus Christ. At this moment Jesus then extended an invitation that, if accepted, would change their paths forever.

They left everything. That's tough. For many scary. To these fishermen it meant a change of well....everything. Work, routine,

livelihood, security, reputation, life plans....everything.

But Jesus was inviting them into a completely new experience WITH him!

In order to experience the fullness of this new life they had to release everything they had known or had been prior to that moment.

Sometimes the 'things' we need to let go of are big and sometimes they are small. Sometimes they are inward emotions and sometimes they are material substance. For some the Holy Spirit may lead a career change and for others it may be a leading to forgive.

So much can hold us back from following Jesus up close and personal. That's the invitation Jesus extends to these fishermen. Come close and be with me.

Giving up control and trusting is not always the easiest thing to do. But the invitation into the life God has designed for us will bring much greater results than the life we try to build on our own.

The moment Peter encountered Jesus could have been just that - a momentary encounter. He could have rowed back to the shoreline with a huge load of fish, drop Jesus off and continued in the life of being a fisherman. He could have stayed in the boat. He could have remained in the old. He could have followed

Journal

This image shows a blank sheet of white paper with horizontal ruling lines. The lines are evenly spaced and run across the width of the page. There are no margins or other markings on the paper.

By Pastor Shaun Fitzgerald

Focus: Are there 'things' that you might still have hold of that need to be released? What might be lingering in your life that is hindering you from completely following Jesus? Ask the Holy Spirit to reveal those things that are keeping you tethered to your old life. Accept the invitation to follow Jesus!

Day 8, January 18th

It is so easy for us to be so impressed by human wisdom, talent, skill, and capability. It is also so easy for us to begin to depend on those things within ourselves. Even in the most subtle ways, our dependency can shift from God's ability and leading to our own ability and understanding. But this scripture is merely putting words to God's activity throughout all of scripture. God almost always shows up and enacts His will differently than anyone expects. From the speech impaired - Moses, to the lowly shepherd boy - David, to the common fishermen - the disciples (who would go on to establish the church). Even Jesus showed up differently. The people of God expected the Messiah to arrive in a chariot with an army and establish the Kingdom of Israel. Instead, He showed up on a donkey with some fishermen and was crucified. God loves humble beginnings! He has no need to make a statement or impress anyone. His motivation in these different stories is to demonstrate His heart of humility and create in us a greater dependency on Him and Him alone. This passage stirs inside of me a desire to trust Him more. I feel less inclined to make things happen on my own or think too hard about a difficult situation. God can take any situation and work it out for good, and most likely it won't come the way I expect it to anyway. It helps me retrain myself to look to Him first for an answer or for help, rather than looking to

human solutions. One other thing this passage does for me: it shows me that God can take flawed, simple, and weak things and use them to bring Him glory. I am one of those things, and chances are if you look inwardly and honestly, you will find weakness and flaws as well.

Scripture- "Instead, God chose things the world considers foolish in order to shame those who think they are wise. And He chose things that are powerless to shame those who are powerful. God chose things despised by the world, things counter as nothing at all, and used them to bring to nothing what the world considers important. As a result, no one can ever boast in the presence of God."

1 Corinthians 1:27-29

Focus: God specializes in using people like us! Just trust yourself a little less, and Him a little more!

Journal

By Daniel Nichols

Day 9, January 19th

I don't know about you, but going into the year 2020 I was ready for change. I was thinking what we all think, "I'm going to start...XY &Z!"

Well, the world certainly changed a lot over this last year, it wasn't the change any of us were expecting. My vision has been blurred and I've been trying to see clearly. Personally, my family has experienced a lot of change & loss in the last 5 months and all I know to do is depend and rely on God. Being in his word and presence daily has sustained me. It takes away the worries of the world. Drawing near to the Lord gives me joy and peace. I am grateful for all that God has done and is doing in my life, despite the circumstances.

Every day we have to make choices. Choose to be joyful & thankful. Like the scripture says, "keep on praying," no matter what! Remember, God is in control. He loves us and he has good plans for us.

Scripture- Always be joyful. Keep on praying. No matter what happens, always be thankful, for this is God's will for you who belong to Christ Jesus.
1 Thessalonians 5:16-18

Focus: On knowing Jesus not for what He can do for us but rather for who He is, what He has already done for us, and what He desires to do through us. Let's be a people with a passion to be consumed by Him!

Journal

[illegible]

By Tracy Bustamante

Day 10, January 20th

Being wrapped in a warm fuzzy blanket on a cold night may be one of my favorite things. There is a great comfort when it's storming outside to feel safe, warm and secure inside. I picture peace like that blanket. So many moments when I have walked through stormy seasons I have felt peace envelope me. Many times it wouldn't make sense, but somehow in the most difficult times that blanket of peace would settle me. It would calm my thoughts and emotions.

Peace is very powerful. True peace is a gift the Lord gives that really doesn't make sense. It brings a confidence that the Lord is near and everything will be okay, because He is big enough and strong enough to anchor us through the storm. Being wrapped in peace doesn't mean the storm has subsided. It is an indicator that my eyes are on the Prince of Peace rather than on the storm.

Where in your life do you need the blanket of peace to wrap around you? Where has worry and fear stolen your confidence in God?

Scripture- "I will keep in perfect peace all whose mind is fixed on me." **Isaiah 26:3**

Focus: Today be alert of your thoughts - fix your mind on Jesus and ask for the peace you need.

Journal

[illegible]

By Pastor Karla Blake

Day 11, January 21st

Growing up my dad had his pilots license and he used to take me up flying on the weekends in a little four seat Cessna airplane that my grandpa owned. I grew up near Chicago so when we would go up we would often fly over Lake Michigan. These are some of my favorite memories as a kid. Flying in this little plane over a lake that looked like the size of an ocean. The best was when he would let me "steer the plane." Of course as a child I thought I was in control and it wasn't until I was older that I realized that the whole time my dad was in control of the plane. There were moments when we would be up in the sky and it would be foggy and cloudy and I would ask my dad, "How can we see to land?" He would explain to me that the instruments on the plane would help him know where and how to land the plane. This was hard for me to understand. Other times when we would go up it would be perfectly clear and he would still use the instruments for much of the landing procedures. I asked him why he still used the instruments and didn't just use just his sight especially since it looked like he could see clearly and he said I have learned as a pilot to never just trust what we see or think we see or what we cannot see.

This lesson has resonated strong in my mind this year. I can't just trust what my mind tells me. We have to trust what the Word of God and only the Word of God has to say.

There was a lot said at the beginning of 2020, comparing it to our eyesight and seeing clearly. I think we can all look back and say that we did not see any of that coming, and many times during the year I was tempted to evaluate my life based on what I see physically, financially, politically, etc. But God constantly kept bringing me back to this passage of scripture in Romans 12. To let God transform me by renewing my mind in Him. To not think more highly than I should of myself and my opinions and thoughts. TO trust in Him and the truth of His Word and not by what I see or don't see in front of me.

Scripture- "And so, dear brothers and sisters, I plead with you to give your bodies to God because of all he has done for you. Let them be a living and holy sacrifice—the kind he will find acceptable. This is truly the way to worship him. Don't copy the behavior and customs of this world, but let God transform you into a new person by changing the way you think. Then you will learn to know God's will for you, which is good and pleasing and perfect. Because of the privilege and authority God has given me, I give each of you this warning: Don't

By Pastor David Blackford

Day 12, January 22nd

In a world where things are constantly changing and constantly moving, I find rest in the scripture *Be still and know that I am God. Psalm 46:10*. One thing I know for sure no matter the circumstances that surround the one constant in our life can be our prayers. Nothing can take away from us the prayers we utter to our Lord.

As a mother of four one of my greatest joys is raising my boys. With that comes a great burden of raising them to be young men of God. In a world that is loud with influence that goes against biblical values and the truth of God, I find myself left with nothing greater than praying for them. There is no better seed I can plant that will reap a great harvest than the seeds of praying for my children. Our children are constantly bombarded with noise in their life that can soon cause a slow fade from the truth. The enemy comes in so many ways. Sometimes loud sometimes quiet and sly. We must fight the battle in prayer covering our children with a shield of the word of God.

Scripture- “I pray that from His glorious, unlimited resources he will give you mighty inner strength through his Holy Spirit. I pray that Christ will be more and more at home in your hearts as you trust in him. May your roots go down deep into the soil of Gods marvelous love. And May you have the power to understand, as all Gods people

should, how wide, how long, how high, and how deep his love really is. May you experience the love of Christ, though it is so great you will never fully understand it. Then you will be filled with the fullness of life and power that comes from God. Now glory be to God! By his mighty power at work within us, he is able to accomplish infinitely more than we would ever dare to ask or hope."

Ephesians 3:16-20

Focus: I invite you to join me today in praying Ephesians 3:16-20 over our children, youth and young adults. The word is powerful and our greatest weapon.

Journal

[illegible]

By Julia Blackford

Day 13, January 23rd

Less of me and more of Him is a difficult principle to observe. This is especially true when we have been presented with seemingly unanswerable questions. It becomes very easy to fall into the trap of asking, maybe even demanding to know, why things have turned out the way they have. Job struggled with this stumbling block. In his devastation and loss, he asked many questions. Why do the wicked prosper? Why does God not judge the world? Why was I even born?

Our questions are much the same as those of Job. Why did this or that person have to die? Why can't I find healing? Why is all this happening to me? When we fail to put Jesus first in our lives, we demand answers to questions that can't be answered this side of heaven. And our frustration grows. Sometimes we even begin to resent God. We dwell on the *why* to the point we are no longer looking to or relying on God.

When we do put Him first, our questions change to faith. Rather than dwelling on the unknowable, we simply walk with God through the valleys, trusting Him to be faithful to His promise to protect us, to comfort us, and to provide His power when our strength is gone. The only way to safely navigate the dark times in our lives is to allow more of Him to light our way. *More of me* blinds us and makes walking the valleys much more difficult.

At all times we should strive for more of Christ and less of ourselves, but particularly when encountering a crisis. That's how we continue to grow in our faith and in the closeness of our walk with Him.

Scripture- He must become greater and greater, and I must become less and less. John 3:30

Focus: More of Him and less of me means power, joy and peace.
Less of me and more of Him means burdens are released.
More of Him lightens my heart and causes my faith to grow.
Less of me means my praises ring and heavenly blessings flow.

Journal

[illegible]

By Chris Shultz

Day 14, January 24th

In Mark 4:1-20 Jesus told a parable about a farmer who sowed seed and it fell on four different types of soil. Some seed fell on a hardened path and was snatched up by birds, some fell on rocky ground and couldn't take root, some fell on thorny ground and was choked out, and some fell on good soil and produced a harvest of 100 times more than had been planted. The four types of soil represents four conditions of the human heart. Today I want to challenge you to maximize the benefits and blessings of participating in this 21 day prayer and fast.

In Hosea 10:12 the Prophet says, "Break up your fallow ground, for it is time to seek the Lord, til He comes and rains righteousness upon you." Now I'm no farmer, but here are 2 kinds of ground, fallow ground and ground that's been broken by the plow. The Fallow Field is contented, protected from the shock of the plow. A field like this lies year after year, safe and undisturbed. But it is paying a terrible price for its tranquility, never does it see the miracle of growth. It can never know fruit because it is afraid of the plow. But for the Cultivated Field, the gates have been opened wide to admit the plow. And when the plow comes, they are business-like, cruel, and in a hurry. Peace is shattered by the farmer and his machinery. The field is upset, turned upside down, bruised and broken. But its reward is worth it. The seeds soon

shoot up, new things are born, to grow, mature, and be harvested.

The Holy Spirit wants full and free access to your heart during these days of fasting. The person of the Fallow Life is contented with the fruit they bore in years past. The "Do Not Disturb" sign is hanging on the door of your heart. The Spirit of Adventure is dead within you. He's fenced in and fruitless and he's also fenced out God and His miracles. The Plowed Life has thrown down the fences and let the plow of the Holy Spirit break up the hardness of the heart through soul searching, transparency, and confession. Remember, miracles follow the plow!

Scripture- "the Prophet says, "Break up your fallow ground, for it is time to seek the Lord, til He comes and rains righteousness upon you." **Hosea 10:12**

Focus: Heavenly Father, thank you for wanting to grow my life and stretch me. I understand that fruit always follows the plow. Father, it's time for me to take down the "No Trespassing" signs in my life. I want to be an open book and let you have access to every room of my heart and life. I'm tired of the dryness and coldness in my soul. Break my heart O' God, I've been stagnant too long. I'm ready to become a bold, faithfilled follower of Jesus Christ. Amen

Journal

By Pastor Kerry Murphy

Day 15, January 25th

You know that place? The place where you're convinced that the more you insist on your own rights, the more frustrated you will be. The place where you realize that the more you pursue life for yourself, the further from Christ you will be. The place where you ultimately realize there must be more of Jesus and less of you.

For so long my life has consisted of wanting more of everything else... more time, more money, more energy, more creativity, more discipline, more willpower, more motivation. Yet the only thing I really need is more Jesus and I definitely need less of me.

You cannot serve God and *self*, either. It means putting Christ in the place where we would normally put ourselves. Less for how others see you and more concern for how others see Jesus.

Here are some steps:

- Find your identity and worth in Him
- Forfeit your will to His
- Fill up on His thoughts, not yours
- Filter your behavior
- Focus on the new you, not the old one

John 3:30 (NIV) says, "He must become greater; I must become less."

Scripture—"No one can serve two masters; for either he will hate the one and love the other, or he will be devoted to one and despise the other. You cannot serve God and wealth." **Matthew 6:24**

Focus: Pray every day for your life and what Jesus has done for you. He gave up His life to save yours.

Journal

[illegible]

By Ellie Quinter

Day 16, January 26th

"Teacher, what good deed must I do to have eternal life?"

Wow! What a question!

This is the question the Rich Young Man came to Jesus with, in the account from Matthew 19. Jesus told him he must keep the commandments AND sell his possessions and give the money to the poor. The bible tells us that this young man went away sad because he had so many possessions. After Jesus tells the disciples, "... it is very hard for a rich person to enter the Kingdom of Heaven," the disciples go on to ask Jesus, "Who in the world can be saved?" Jesus tells us that from a human standpoint it's impossible. "But with God everything is possible." Matthew 19:26

The Rich Young Man is an ever more perfect example of what our culture has become through and through. Our god has become our possessions and our wealth has become our security. The young man goes away sad because he cannot bring himself to stop worshipping the ruling force in his life even though he wants eternal life. We have to decide daily that we are going to follow Christ. Whatever we have allowed to become "our god" needs to be given up. We cannot, however, expect to "appease" the Lord by setting something aside that doesn't come at a sacrifice. What Jesus ultimately asked of the young man was to let

go of what had become his means of personal identity, power, and a sense of meaning in life– that it had become the idolatrous god of his life. Jesus' strategy is to turn this man from focusing on external conformity to the culture to examining his heart, revealing his ruling god. Jesus wants to do the same thing with us.

Whether it's wealth or something else, Jesus is calling us to give away everything, exchanging our "god" for the eternal gift found in following Jesus as the One True God.

Jesus ultimate answer to the question originally posed, "What must I do to have eternal life?"

...follow Him.

Jesus ends this passage by promising eternal life to those that follow Him. Even more exciting is not just the promise of eternal life but we will receive a hundredfold what was given and "...many who are first will be last, and the last first."

Scripture- Matthew 19:16-30

Focus: Jesus, help me examine my heart to know what I need to remove as the god of my life so I can place you there as the one and only true God.

Journal

By Phil McDowell

Day 17, January 27

I love to picture Jesus teaching his disciples, and the crowds that gathered around him. In this passage of Luke, Jesus used Simon's boat to be his pulpit. This boat had not brought the fishermen success that day, only frustration, as they caught nothing that night. But Jesus saw purpose in the boat and used it to teach from, bringing hope to the people. Once the crowds left, Jesus continued to speak to Simon and the other fishermen, words that would challenge them and the way they thought about their lives. Jesus told them to go back out and try to fish one more time. In their minds they were done for the night, already cleaning their nets and probably feeling disappointed that they had nothing to show for their day of hard work. In their mind, they had failed and were calling it a night. But Jesus had something else for them. Would they be obedient and listen to him, or head home? In that moment they had a choice to make... their way (end in failure, get some sleep, try again tomorrow) or His way (unsure of the outcome)? "...he said to Simon, 'Push out into deep water and let your nets out for a catch.' Simon said, 'Master, we've been fishing hard all night and haven't caught even a minnow. But IF YOU SAY SO, I will let out the nets.' "

These words made me pause. I'm not a fisherman. I don't know how to toss a net, so not catching a

minnow wouldn't really surprise or disappoint me. But what am I doing in my day to day life, or believing in for myself or my family that he wants to challenge me towards obedience? If I put myself into that fisherman moment, what would my words be? What about you? Master I've been _____. But if you say so I will _____.

When the disciples chose obedience, they were abundantly blessed! "It was no sooner said than done—a huge haul of fish, straining the nets past capacity. (vs 6)"

None of this happened in their own strength, but when they turned their focus off of themselves and onto what the Master said, they found success-HUGE SUCCESS!

Their obedience allowed God to do a work they weren't expecting. And this set them up for a lifetime of ministry with Him, as they became 'fishers of men' (vs 10)

Living in our own strength often causes stress and exhaustion and feelings of failure. Jesus wants to be our strength, and provide for us in greater ways than we can imagine. It is challenging to live daily life in the power of God, when we think we know what is best, and that doing things 'our way' is the only way. What have we been praying on, or waiting for, or striving towards in our own strength, that He may want to change?

How can we turn the focus from ourselves onto Him? Do we believe his words for us are trustworthy and

rooted in love and protection, provision and peace? Pause a moment and ask God to reveal to you what your "I've been" might be. Listen for his loving commands and then answer "If you say so, I will".

Scripture-“Once when he was standing on the shore of Lake Gennesaret, the crowd was pushing in on him to better hear the Word of God. He noticed two boats tied up. The fishermen had just left them and were out scrubbing their nets. He climbed into the boat that was Simon’s and asked him to put out a little from the shore. Sitting there, using the boat for a pulpit, he taught the crowd. When he finished teaching, he said to Simon, “Push out into deep water and let your nets out for a catch.” Simon said, “Master, we’ve been fishing hard all night and haven’t caught even a minnow. But if you say so, I’ll let out the nets.” It was no sooner said than done—a huge haul of fish, straining the nets past capacity. They waved to their partners in the other boat to come help them. They filled both boats, nearly swamping them with the catch.

Luke 5:1-7 (TMT)

Focus: Master Jesus, I know that you have my life in your hands. Forgive me for believing in my own strength more than Yours. Reveal to me what I have been doing that you may want to rearrange in my life and open my ears to hear your words of conviction and direction.

Remind me that more of You is always better for my life. Give me the daily strength to think less of myself and more of You, so that You receive the glory in everything. Thank you for your mercy and power. I trust you with my life and submit to your love and leadership, believing Your power will be at work in me in new ways this year.

Journal

This image shows a blank sheet of white paper with horizontal ruling lines. The lines are evenly spaced and run across the width of the page. There are no margins, text, or other markings on the paper.

By Sarah Sorell

Day 18, January 28th

The Lord is "MY REVELATION-LIGHT". I believe we so often continue to walk and operate in the same way all the time. We've developed patterns and just do what we do almost as if on autopilot, for instance you get out of bed in the night and head to your destination without turning on the lights, because you've made this trek many times before. But on this night the vacuum cleaner was left in a precarious position, and low and behold you stub your toe and end up face down on the ground. It's the same way in our daily walking out of life we've developed patterns, attitudes and habits that may not be bad at the time, but as we travel life's journey they may become stumbling blocks for our growth into who God has created us to be. It's much like when the Bible talks about maturing in our faith, when we start out in our Christian walk we are infants and limited in our knowledge, but as we mature we must take responsibility, the things that were once ok are no longer the best things for us. Today is the day to stop and take inventory of your life. Are you living in a way that is daily seeking the revelation light to guide you and reveal the adjustments you need to make? Have you determined in your heart to continue looking ahead in anticipation of what is yet to come? Your failures and mistakes from the past are behind you; don't allow them to distract you from what is coming today. Glean what you can from them, but quickly get

back to looking ahead as God illuminates new and better things. You've barely scratched the potential of who you've been created to be.

Scripture-The Lord is my revelation-light to guide me along the way; he's the source of my salvation to defend me every day. I fear no one! I'll never turn back and run from you, Lord; surround and protect me. **Psalms 27:1**

Focus:I pray that the light of God will illuminate the eyes of your imagination, flooding you with light, until you experience the full revelation of the hope of his calling that is, the wealth of God's glorious inheritances that he finds in us, his holy ones!

Journal

By Lee Blake

Day 19, January 29th

Have you ever worked with clay? It is cold, lumpy and hard. It is not very easy to work with. Picture yourself as a hard lump of clay and God as our potter. He puts us on his potter's wheel and he begins to mold us. Often I fight back and make it about myself and what I want to be shaped into. I make it about me instead of Him. Trust me I am stubborn and hard to work with sometimes. I have a problem giving up control and allowing God to mold me. But I have to remind myself that God has more love for me than anyone. He is shaping me to be the best person I can be. God is our potter and he is shaping us in his image.

I encourage you during this fast to let God mold and shape you. Allow it to be more about God and less about you. Know that He is Good and is a love like no other. Enjoy your life in the Spirit right now on the way to where God is shaping you. Let the potter do His work.

Scripture- “But who do you think you are to second-guess God? How could a human being molded out of clay say to the one who molded him, Why in the world did you make me this way? Or are you denying the right of the potter to make out of clay whatever he wants? Doesn’t the potter have the right to make from the same lump of clay an elegant vase or an ordinary pot?” Romans 9:20-21

knowledge of God, being strengthened with all power according to his glorious might so that you may have great endurance and patience. **Colossians 1:9-11**

Focus: Allow God to mold and shape you. Make it more about God and less about you.

Journal

[illegible]

By Itiel Cifuentes

Day 20, January 30th

It's the start of the New Year. 2021 is finally here; and if you follow the trend or tradition of the new year, you've probably made a list of some "new year's resolutions" you would like to stick to. The second most common resolution made every year is "lose weight"—most often done by dieting. Every time I start a diet, the first week is always the hardest. It's the week when my body is craving all the things I had been feeding it. I generally find that after that first week, the cravings for the junk subside and I start to crave and enjoy the healthy food I feed it.

I have felt a deep stirring in my spirit all through 2020 to examine my life and change anything in me that was not pleasing to the Lord. As I began to read books about Christian living, "self-help" books, theological books and yearly devotions, I felt the Lord ask me to stop. I had become bored of the Bible and wanted something that, while still feeding me truth, would keep me entertained. I realized that I had been feeding myself so much "entertainment", God's word wasn't satisfying me. As I began reading the Bible diligently, not only did my hunger for the Word grow, but God

began revealing truth to me and showing me areas in my life that were not up to His holy standard. Things that I thought were okay, but He did not see as pleasing. (See John 17:17)

Scripture- "[His] word is a lamp to [our] feet and a light to [our] path"
Psalms 119:105

Focus: I want to encourage you during the remaining days of the fast and as we go further into 2021, GET IN THE WORD. Even when you don't feel like it, read the Word. Whatever you feed yourself, you will crave. Let us, the Church, stop gorging ourselves on cheap entertainment and start feeding ourselves the richness of God's Word. During these troubling days when wickedness, evil and darkness are all around us.

Journal

By Lauren Britt

Day 21, January 31st

As we come to a close in this 21 days of prayer and fasting I want to encourage you to keep seeking God and even more to walk in obedience to the things He speaks to you. What good is it to seek God if we ignore the things He says?

Hearing the Lord's voice can be so challenging and I think we've made it more difficult that it has to be. I remember having a thought and asking is that God? is it the devil? or is it just me? I made a decision one day to take action and truly discover God's voice in my life. I figured if what I thought in my heart wasn't harmful or contrary to God's word, then it probably wasn't the devil. And most of us being selfish in nature would probably not think of good things all on my own without some help from the Lord.

So I put it to the test. If I thought something may be from the Lord, I would do it. I can tell you that 30 seconds in I would know if it was a Karla thing or a God thing. I have made some mistakes along the way, but have come to a place of confidence in hearing God and have seen way more good than harm come. So what about you, will you take this time you have spent asking the Lord for more of Him and believe He has heard your cry? Live out what you have gained from this time. Put your own fears and doubts aside to step out in faith and see More of Him become evident in your life.

Scripture- This is what the Lord says; “Stop at the crossroads and look around. Ask for the old godly way, and walk in it. Travel its path, and you will find rest for your souls.” Jeremiah 6:16

Focus: What step do you need to take today as an act of learning God's voice? Make the call, send a note, stop by or pray for someone.

Journal

[illegible]

By Karla Blake