

21

DAY

FAST

JOURNAL

OVER THE COURSE OF THE NEXT 21 DAYS,

we would like to invite you on a journey—a journey that isn't for the faint of heart, but for those who want to go deeper in their relationship with God through the practice of fasting.

By definition, fasting is, “The sacrificing of food for a spiritual goal or vision.” That goal could be the healing of a sick loved one or the breaking of a life-long stronghold. The vision could be divine direction for a key decision or commitment.

Fasting, accompanied by fervent intercession, has the power to elevate your prayers and enable you to experience the fullness of what God has for you. We see God's people fasting throughout the Bible. We see it in the life of Moses as he received the 10 commandments of God (Exodus 34:28). We see this pattern in the life of Elijah as he breaks through depression and hears God's next assignment for his life (1 Kings 19:8). We see it in the lives of

Esther and Jehoshaphat as they pray for supernatural intervention (Esther 4:16; 2 Chronicles 20:3). We see it in the life of Daniel as he struggles in spiritual battle and receives God's revelation for the future of the world (Daniel 10:2-3). We even see it in the life of Jesus as He battles Satan in the wilderness (Matthew 4:2).

The examples are clear and abundant throughout God's Word, but for the most part, the Christian Church tends to view fasting as a spiritual exercise for a select few, the elite super-Christians. But Jesus invites and assumes all those who follow Him will fast. During His Sermon on the Mount, He even goes so far to say, “when you fast,” not “if you fast” (Matthew 6:16 NKJV). It's the normal expectation for the believer in Christ, not the exception, and I believe He's calling us to fast now in order to drown out the distractions of this world and focus more fully on Him.

With this in mind, our church family will step into a great challenge, and an even greater opportunity, over the next three weeks as we fast together for that one family member, friend, neighbor, coworker, classmate, or loved one we will commit to invite to Easter service this year. Spend time over the next 21 days praying for that person, that the Lord would speak to them, work in their hearts, and bring them to salvation this Easter.

As you seek God's direction on how He would have you fast, please keep in mind that your fast can look like:

- Refraining from food
- The Daniel Fast (eating only fruits and vegetables)
- Refraining from desserts (no coffee or sugar)
- Refraining from social media or electronics

Whatever you choose, remember, that without replacing these things with time spent in prayer and God's Word, all of this is really just meaningless. Let's not sell this experience short by making that mistake!

Instead, take the opportunity to skip that dinner, or bowl of ice cream, or that TV show,

and go for a 30-minute walk and pray for that loved one. Seek God's heart for the next 21 days and learn to intercede for spiritual breakthroughs in your life and the lives of others. Ask God to break strongholds of lust, anger, gossip, and greed. Our God responds uniquely to desperation—the more we press in, often the more quickly and radically He acts on behalf of His children who cry out to Him.

At the end of this journey, I hope that as a result of your time with the Lord and your dedicated prayers for others, you will be able to answer the question, “Who am I now?” with the deepest conviction, “I am more like Jesus!”

In Christ,



Doug Sauder
Lead Pastor

BEFORE YOU BEGIN YOUR **FAST**

“You will seek me and find me when you seek me with all your heart.”—Jeremiah 29:13 (NIV)

Fasting is among the most powerful and misunderstood dynamics of the Christian life. It’s misunderstood, because in many circles fasting has become synonymous with “starving yourself.” That’s not the case!

The Bible reveals to us that the principle of fasting is to set aside the things of this world for the purpose of focusing more fully on God. It’s choosing to invest in the spiritual at the cost of the physical. The power of fasting isn’t that it leaves us lacking, but that it facilitates a fuller connection with the all-powerful God. This perspective will make all the difference throughout the duration of your fast.

Another common misunderstanding is that fasting is always about food. To be clear, most of the fasting we see in Scripture involves the absence of food. However, fasting isn’t necessarily limited to what we eat. Again, the basic principle is to put aside the material things that would distract us from God.

While we do encourage you to prayerfully consider fasting from food (as well as considering any unique medical needs you might have), we also invite you to think about anything else that might divert your attention from the Lord during this time. In this age of information, the list of potential distractions is getting longer and longer. Take some time to reflect on what God may want you to cross off that list for this fast.

We pray the Lord uses these guidelines to lead and bless you in the spiritual journey that lies ahead as you seek Him wholeheartedly.

YOUR COMMITMENT

I, _____,
commit to fast unto the Lord for the next 21 days.

I’m fasting from _____.

I’m fasting because I want to see

come to know the Lord—or come back to the Lord
—this Easter.

WEEK ONE

Doug Sauder
Lead Pastor

We learn so much from the life of Jesus. As we look at the gospels, we're looking at more than a man's life. We're looking at the embodiment of spiritual perfection in every possible way. What Jesus said, what Jesus did, even what Jesus thought . . . it's the exact execution of what's good and right.

Christ's perfect life is the foundation for the Christian life. We really can't go wrong by following His example, and this includes the act of fasting that we're going to engage in for the next three weeks. Jesus not only shows us that we are to fast, but He goes even further to reveal why we should fast. It's essential for us to be settled on this as we begin our journey.

To set the stage, Jesus and His disciples are on a long and tiring journey by foot from Judea into the region of Samaria. The Gospel of John tells us they decided to take a break in a town called Sychar. The disciples go into town to buy some food while Jesus

stays behind to rest beside a well (John 4:5-8).

What happens next is an amazing exchange between Jesus and a woman who comes to the well for worldly water. However, she leaves having met the Living Water who promises to satisfy her deepest thirsts and longings in life. Through her conversation with Jesus, she connects with God's truth and love, so she immediately goes and tells the townspeople about Jesus and implores them to see Him for themselves (John 4:28-29).

Just before she leaves, the disciples return with their provisions. They're shocked that Jesus had engaged in a deep conversation with a strange woman—a social no-no in that setting. As she leaves, they encourage Jesus to eat the food they had just bought. It's at this point that Jesus says something so foundational for our approach to fasting: "I have food to eat of which you do not know" (John 4:32 NKJV).

As usual, the disciples don't fully understand—they think someone already gave Him some food. But He goes on to clarify: "My food is to do the will of Him who sent Me, and to finish His work" (John 4:34 NKJV).

Now, what does this have to do with fasting? Jesus is planting an important flag in the ground here by saying that His satisfaction does not come from physical food. Instead, His true food, His satisfaction and fulfillment, comes from doing what His Heavenly Father wants Him to do—which, in this instance, was to bring the message of the gospel to this woman and the townspeople of Sychar.

In other words, fulfilling His spiritual mission was more fulfilling than any amount of bread or meat could be. That's the perspective we need to have for the next 21 days. We need to focus on where our true fulfillment is found. It isn't found in food, entertainment, or whatever you've determined to

fast from. It's found in the same place Jesus said it was . . . in doing what God wants.

God isn't passive in all of this. He has a plan and purpose for using this fast to accomplish great things for His Kingdom, and He wants to use you to do it! He wants to use you to help bring someone into His family, into His kingdom. Remember that, because when you understand that you're walking in the center of God's will, you can find a fulfillment that transcends anything this world can offer.

As we begin this spiritual journey, learn from Jesus, be focused on your Heavenly Father's will, and find the deepest satisfaction in fulfilling it!



DAY 1

“Set your minds on things above, not on earthly things.”
—Colossians 3:2 (NIV)

DAY 2

*“So we fix our eyes not on what is seen, but on what is unseen,
since what is seen is temporary, but what is unseen is eternal.”*
—2 Corinthians 4:18 (NIV)

DAY 3

“Do not work for food that spoils, but for food that endures to eternal life, which the Son of Man will give you. For on him God the Father has placed his seal of approval.”—John 6:27 (NIV)

DAY 4

“Do not conform to the pattern of this world, but be transformed by the renewing of your mind. Then you will be able to test and approve what God’s will is—his good, pleasing and perfect will.”—Romans 12:2 (NIV)

DAY 5

“For I have come down from heaven to do the will of God who sent me, not to do my own will.”—John 6:38 (NLT)

DAY 6

“Don’t store up treasures here on earth, where moths eat them and rust destroys them, and where thieves break in and steal. Store your treasures in heaven, where moths and rust cannot destroy, and thieves do not break in and steal. Wherever your treasure is, there the desires of your heart will also be.”—Matthew 6:19–21 (NLT)

DAY 7

“Make sure that no one is immoral or godless like Esau, who traded his birthright as the firstborn son for a single meal.”—Hebrews 12:16 (NLT)

REFLECT ON THE WEEK

Spend some time reflecting on everything the Lord showed you this week. Look back on your prayers and consider what you read in the Word.

WEEK TWO

Danny Saavedra

Communications Minister

Congratulations! You've made it through the first week of your 21-day fast. I've heard it said that the first week is always the hardest, but I personally haven't found that to be the case. In my experience, the middle section of a journey is usually the most difficult.

How so? Well, at the beginning, we're motivated and driven, excited and empowered, and that inspiration tends to carry us through the first few days. And on the last leg, when we can see the end in sight, I've discovered there is a second wind, a last burst of energy stored up to help us cross that finish line. But when we're in the middle, that place where we can't see the starting line anymore and the finish line is still too far off, that's where most of us tend to lose interest and ultimately give up.

So today, I want to encourage you to keep going! Though you may not see the finish line, it's there.

And the reason you started this fast, the person God put on your heart to pray for and fast over, is still there. The Lord sees your desire to honor Him and He will carry you through if you rely on Him and His strength. He will help you get through those moments when you feel like giving up as His Spirit empowers and inspires you to push through.

Remember, the results of this fast—having a deeper intimacy and a closer walk with Jesus, experiencing His presence and power on a more personal level, and the work of the Spirit in the life of the one you're praying for—far outweigh the sacrifice you're making.

The verses for this week are about entering God's presence with thankfulness, gladness, and joy, about finding your strength in Him, and about clinging to Him in order to persevere. Nehemiah 8:10

(NLT) in particular is a powerful verse when you consider what Jesus said in John 4:32 (HCSB): "I have food to eat that you don't know about." Consider the Word of God and your time in prayer, and worship unto Him as a "feast of rich foods and sweet drinks."

If you've become focused on the physical or mental hardships you're facing or the burdens you're bringing to God in prayer, then I challenge you to spend this week intentionally living in the joy of the Lord. Remember, joy is not circumstantial; it's a choice, an attitude, a mindset, and way of life. It requires practice and effort to examine and approach everything in light of the grace of Christ.

So, during your journaling time, I suggest you simply write down some things God has done to bring you joy and meditate on them throughout the week. Sing a song of praise to Him. Pray that God will stir an urgency in you to press in and see what He has for you during and beyond these 21 days.



DAY 8

“Shout with joy to the Lord, all the earth! Worship the Lord with gladness. Come before him, singing with joy. Acknowledge that the Lord is God! He made us, and we are his. We are his people, the sheep of his pasture. Enter his gates with thanksgiving; go into his courts with praise. Give thanks to him and praise his name. For the Lord is good. His unfailing love continues forever, and his faithfulness continues to each generation.”—Psalm 100:1-5 (NLT)

DAY 9

*“My grace is sufficient for you, for my power is made perfect in weakness.’ Therefore I will boast all the more gladly about my weaknesses, so that Christ’s power may rest on me.”
—2 Corinthians 12:9 (NIV)*

DAY 10

“The tempter came to him and said, ‘If you are the Son of God, tell these stones to become bread.’ Jesus answered, ‘It is written: Man shall not live on bread alone, but on every word that comes from the mouth of God.’”—Matthew 4:3-4 (NIV)

DAY 11

“But as for you, be strong; don’t be discouraged, for your work has a reward.”—2 Chronicles 15:7 (HCSB)

DAY 12

“Have I not commanded you? Be strong and courageous. Do not be afraid; do not be discouraged, for the Lord your God will be with you wherever you go.”—Joshua 1:9 (NIV)

DAY 13

“Go and enjoy choice food and sweet drinks, and send some to those who have nothing prepared. This day is holy to our Lord. Do not grieve, for the joy of the Lord is your strength.”—Nehemiah 8:10 (NIV)

DAY 14

“We count those blessed who endured. You have heard of the endurance of Job and have seen the outcome of the Lord’s dealings, that the Lord is full of compassion and is merciful.”—James 5:11 (NASB)

REFLECT ON THE WEEK

Spend some time reflecting on everything the Lord showed you this week. Look back on your prayers and consider what you read in the Word.

WEEK THREE

Dan Hickling
Assistant Pastor

It's finally here! You've rounded the corner into the final week of our church-wide, 21-day fast. It goes without saying that your participation is to be commended, because what you're doing isn't easy!

As you now know first-hand, the very nature of fasting is challenging . . . which is what makes it so powerful! It presses us into places that are outside of our conventional comforts, into new territory. We break new ground with God and our faith finds new heights and depths.

You've undoubtedly discovered these things to be true on this journey. And as with any journey, there's always a destination at the end. We don't set out on a trip or vacation without having a goal in mind. There needs to be a goal, a finish line, and the same holds true for the fasting journey you began 14 days ago.

So, let me ask you, what is your goal? Do you remember why you started this in the first place?

When you heard this challenge announced, whose face was it that gripped you to accept? Was it someone who you love dearly that needs to know Jesus?

Whatever your purpose for accepting this challenge, I want to encourage you to keep pushing ahead. If you really concentrate your focus, you can start to make out that finish line on the horizon. No doubt, you're going to run into more than a few obstacles before you cross it. The ground isn't level and smooth; it's filled with twists and turns that will tempt you to give up and quit. When that happens, and it will happen, dwell on these two words: "Finish well!"

That's not my exhortation, but the Lord's, because He calls us to be a people who finish what we start. That's the example He has set for us. God doesn't give up or quit. He isn't fully satisfied with how something starts out. He sees everything that He begins right on through to completion . . . including us: "Being confident of this very thing, that He who has

begun a good work in you will complete it until the day of Jesus Christ" (Philippians 1:6 NKJV).

Aren't you glad God is like that? Isn't it a comfort to know that He will see all things through to their completion? And don't you want to follow in the Father's footsteps in finishing the fast you've begun?

Of course you do! Now here's the incredible thing. The God who calls us to finish well is also the God who will empower us to do it. He doesn't leave us on our own but fills us with His Spirit so that we can know His strength when we are weak and weary. All we need to do is recognize our need and rely on His provision by making it our priority to be filled with the Holy Spirit. When we ask, God will answer!

So as you start this last leg of the journey, let these Scriptures guide and motivate your heart and mind. Focus on the finish line, it's getting closer! Remember the goal that's guided you this far, it's still out there! Don't forget God set an example for you to finish well; it's His will for you! Above all, allow His Spirit to fill you with His heavenly strength; it's yours for the asking!

DAY 15

“I focus on this one thing: Forgetting the past and looking forward to what lies ahead, I press on to reach the end of the race and receive the heavenly prize for which God, through Christ Jesus, is calling us.”
—Philippians 3:13-14 (NLT)

DAY 16

“Therefore, since we are surrounded by such a huge crowd of witnesses to the life of faith, let us strip off every weight that slows us down, especially the sin that so easily trips us up. And let us run with endurance the race God has set before us. We do this by keeping our eyes on Jesus, the champion who initiates and perfects our faith.”
—Hebrews 12:1-2 (NLT)

DAY 17

“Whoever sows to please their flesh, from the flesh will reap destruction; whoever sows to please the Spirit, from the Spirit will reap eternal life. Let us not become weary in doing good, for at the proper time we will reap a harvest if we do not give up.”—Galatians 6:8–9 (NIV)

DAY 18

“Jesus told his disciples a story to show that they should always pray and never give up. ‘There was a judge in a certain city,’ he said, ‘who neither feared God nor cared about people. A widow of that city came to him repeatedly, saying, ‘Give me justice in this dispute with my enemy.’ The judge ignored her for a while, but finally he said to himself, ‘I don’t fear God or care about people, but this woman is driving me crazy. I’m going to see that she gets justice, because she is wearing me out with her constant requests!’ Then the Lord said, ‘Learn a lesson from this unjust judge. Even he rendered a just decision in the end. So don’t you think God will surely give justice to his chosen people who cry out to him day and night?’”—Luke 18:1–7 (NLT)

DAY 19

“But none of these things move me; nor do I count my life dear to myself, so that I may finish my race with joy, and the ministry which I received from the Lord Jesus.”—Acts 20:24 (NKJV)

DAY 20

“Ask and it will be given to you; seek and you will find; knock and the door will be opened to you. For everyone who asks receives; the one who seeks finds; and to the one who knocks, the door will be opened. Which of you fathers, if your son asks for a fish, will give him a snake instead? Or if he asks for an egg, will give him a scorpion? If you then, though you are evil, know how to give good gifts to your children, how much more will your Father in heaven give the Holy Spirit to those who ask him!”—Luke 11:9-13 (NIV)

DAY 21

"I have fought the good fight, I have finished the race, and I have remained faithful."—2 Timothy 4:7 (NLT)

REFLECT ON THE WEEK

Spend some time reflecting on everything the Lord showed you this week. Look back on your prayers and consider what you read in the Word.

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