

21 DAYS OF



PRAYER



AND FASTING

JANUARY 12TH - FEBRUARY 1ST

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Overview of 21 Days of Prayer and Fasting

What will we as a church be praying for over the next 21 days?

The following pages (2-4) have a detailed schedule with daily prayer prompts. Some days also have a suggested testimony to read, and there is also a list of suggested songs for you to listen to as you prepare your hearts for prayer. The detailed schedule also provides a list of weekly prayer gatherings where you can meet with other believers to pray.

What is the expectation for attending the prayer gatherings?

We encourage you to gather with other believers to pray once a week during this time period. Many of you are already doing that, either in your Grace Group or during the Thursday night prayer meeting. If none of the prayer gatherings work for your schedule, and you are not currently praying with other believers on a weekly basis, please consider scheduling your own prayer meeting with friends at a time and location that does work for your schedule during this time period. While we expect that the majority of your prayer time will be in your own home, we do hope you will also join with other believers once a week during this time (Matthew 18:20).

Thank you for taking part in this prayer journey. We trust it will be a powerful and fruitful time for our church.

Why 21 Days of Prayer and Fasting?

21 days of prayer and fasting is taken from Daniel 10:2-3 “In those days I, Daniel, was mourning for three weeks. I ate no delicacies, no meat or wine entered my mouth, nor did I anoint myself at all, for the full three weeks.” Fasting is mentioned throughout the Bible, in both the Old and New Testament. Moses, Queen Esther, David, Daniel, Anna, Paul, and Jesus Christ are all people who fasted and prayed.

Important note on fasting: Fasting requires reasonable precautions. If you have any health concerns, please consult your physician first, especially if you are taking medication, have a chronic health condition, or are pregnant or nursing a baby.

What does it mean to fast?

There are a variety of ways to approach fasting during this time period. Your decision on how to fast during this 21 day period is between you and God. You may choose to fast once during the 21 days, once a week, or multiple times each week. If you are fasting more than once, you may decide to vary the type of fasting you do each week. Choose what will work best for your schedule. **Again, if you have health concerns, please do not fast without consulting your physician.**

3 suggested types of fasting:

1. Daniel Fast (only fruits and vegetables, no meat, alcohol, or “delicacies.”)
2. 24 hour Fast—one meal within 24 hour period, usually dinner
3. Liquids Only Fast

Why should we fast at all?

For a detailed answer to this question, please see pages 23-24.

Daily Schedule

WEEK ONE: Pray for our church

“Let us then with confidence draw near to the throne of grace, that we may receive mercy and find grace to help in time of need.” Hebrews 4:16 ESV

DAY	DATE	GROUP PRAYER GATHERING TIME	TESTIMONY TO READ	PRAYER TOPIC
1	JAN 12 - Mon	—	Testimony #1	Pray for our church, that we would be committed to prayer & grow deeper in love for Christ & each other
2	JAN 13 - Tues	Church Sanctuary 5:30-6:30p.m. (Pastor Eric leading)	—	Pray for our pastors, their wives, and their families
3	JAN 14 - Wed	Church Sanctuary 5:30-6:30p.m. (Pastor Eric leading)	—	Pray for our elders and deacons
4	JAN 15 - Thu	Church Library 6:30-7:15p.m. (Pastor John leading)	Testimony #2	Pray for those who are grieving and experienced loss this past year
5	JAN 16 - Fri	—	Testimony #3	Pray for the prayer chain requests, for those that need healing, and for prodigals
6	JAN 17 - Sat	—	Testimony #4	Pray for God to guide & direct us, that He would use us to make a difference in the lives of others & help them to know Jesus as Savior
7	JAN 18 - Sun	Church Library 9:00-9:30a.m. (Scott Rice leading)	—	Pray for our Sunday School teachers and their students

“I pray because I can’t help myself. I pray because I’m helpless. I pray because the need flows out of me all the time, waking and sleeping. It doesn’t change God. It changes me.” —C.S. Lewis

WEEK TWO: Pray for our nation

“First of all, then, I urge that supplications, prayers, intercessions, and thanksgivings be made for all people, for kings and all who are in high positions, that we may lead a peaceful and quiet life, godly and dignified in every way.” 1 Timothy 2:1-3 ESV

DAY	DATE	GROUP PRAYER GATHERING TIME	TESTIMONY TO READ	PRAYER TOPIC
8	JAN 19 - Mon	—	Testimony #5	Pray for our president, his administration, and for leaders in Congress & Senate
9	JAN 20 - Tues	Church Sanctuary 5:30-6:30p.m. (Pastor Eric leading)	Testimony #6	Pray for the churches across our nation, and that there would be revival in our land
10	JAN 21 - Wed	Church Sanctuary 5:30-6:30p.m. (Pastor Eric leading)	—	Pray for the protection of the unborn, and that as a nation, we would value life
11	JAN 22 - Thu	Church Library 6:30-7:15p.m. (Pastor John leading)	Testimony #7	Pray that families would have a renewed reverence for marriage
12	JAN 23 - Fri	—	—	Pray for our local government and revival in our city
13	JAN 24 - Sat	—	—	Pray for those serving our country in the military
14	JAN 25 - Sun	Church Library 9:00-9:30 a.m. (Scott Rice leading)	Testimony #8	Pray for believers in our nation to stand for truth

“I have been driven many times upon my knees by the overwhelming conviction that I had no where else to go. My own wisdom and that of all about me sensed insufficient for that day.” Abraham Lincoln

WEEK THREE: Pray for other nations

“Go therefore and make disciples of all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit.” Matthew 28:19

DAY	DATE	GROUP PRAYER GATHERING TIME	TESTIMONY TO READ	PRAYER TOPIC
15	JAN 26 - Mon	—	Testimony #9	Pray for the persecuted church in places such as Sudan, Nigeria, India, and North Korea
16	JAN 27 - Tues	Church Sanctuary 5:30-6:30p.m. (Pastor Eric leading)	—	Pray for Bible translators and Bible distribution in difficult and dangerous places (Charles & Julie Champlin, John Mathews)
17	JAN 28 - Wed	Church Sanctuary 5:30-6:30p.m. (Pastor Eric leading)	Testimony #10	Pray for Christians caring for traumatized children and orphans and humanitarian needs globally (JJ Lail, Gazi & Bethany Lame, Charles & Julie Champlin)
18	JAN 29 - Thu	Church Library 6:30-7:15p.m. (Pastor John leading)	Testimony #11	Pray for the Jewish people and those enduring war and pursuing peace (John & Laura Shindeldecker)
19	JAN 30 - Fri	—	—	Pray for the salvation of Muslims and Hindus (Jen & Kamran, Clement & Sathya)
20	JAN 31 - Sat	—	—	Pray for global church planting and pastoral training (Dr. Phil Eyster, Ted & Juli Kautzmann, Elisei & Andriana Rusu, Clement & Sathya)
21	FEB 1 - Sun	Church Library 9:00-9:30a.m. (Scott Rice leading)	Testimony #12	Pray for international students to receive the good news of Jesus Christ and to be saved (Joe & Bev Bushelman, Frank & Beth Kuligowski)

“It is possible to move men, through God, by prayer alone.”—Hudson Taylor

Suggested Song List: A collection of Hymns and Worship Songs

1. Boldly I approach The Throne (Art of Celebration) by Rend Collective
2. Immortal, Invisible, God Only Wise
3. I Lift My Hands by Chris Tomlin
4. Send the Light
5. Still Waters by Leanna Crawford
6. Will Jesus Find Us Watching?
7. Build My Life by Pat Barrett with Chris Tomlin
8. Speak O Lord
9. This is My Father's World
10. Revive Us Again
11. Gratitude by Brandon Lake
12. O Church Arise
13. This is My Father's World
14. Psalm 150
15. Holy, Holy, Holy
16. There Is A Fountain
17. Higher Ground
18. Free Waters
19. Lesson of Love
20. How Great Is Our God (World Version) by Chris Tomlin
21. Psalm 90 by Shane and Shane

Testimonies

Why are testimonies about answered prayer included in this packet?

The testimonies are our way of giving thanks to God and writing down answered prayers. George Mueller (1805-1898) was known for his prayer life and the way he prayed specifically for God to provide for his work in caring for orphans. In his lifetime, he had over 50,000 answers to prayers recorded in his journals.

How often do you give God praise and thank him for answered prayers? Too often, we can neglect to do this. When we fail to make time to reflect and thank him for the ways he has answered our prayers, we are missing a faith building opportunity. Thanking God for the ways he has answered prayers not only is an act of obedience (1 Thessalonians 5:18, Ephesians 5:20), it is a way to strengthen our faith as we remember all the ways he has come alongside us.

As you start this new year, consider keeping a journal as George Mueller did, for answered prayers. This is one way to honor and thank God for hearing and answering our prayers. It also builds our faith and reminds us of the importance to pray without ceasing (1 Thessalonians 5:17).

What if prayer is not something I do regularly?

Testimony #1 addresses this in a form of a prayer asking for forgiveness. Testimony #1 is a reminder or the importance of prayer.

What about unanswered prayers?

While we know that God always hears our prayers, sometimes he chooses not to answer our prayers the way we hope. The opening lines of the song *Kind* by Cory Asbury reflect this:

*Sometimes marriages don't work, and sometimes babies die
Sometimes rehab turns to relapse and you're left just askin' why
And for all the prayers I've prayed, I still wonder if He's real
And if He is, how is He choosin' who He does and doesn't heal?*

So, in addition to testimonies about answered prayer, there are also 2 testimonies about unanswered prayer because sometimes God's answer may be "no" or "not yet." It doesn't mean our prayers aren't heard. His plan is often different from our own.

Testimony #1

Forgive Me for My Prayerlessness

Dear Lord,

Forgive me for my prayerlessness. When I fail to pray, I am really saying time spent with you is not necessary, or, I have more important things to do than to spend time with you. How foolish! Forgive me for thinking I can begin this day without asking for your wisdom to guide me. How foolish to try to go through the day on the wisdom I can muster. Forgive me for thinking I can begin this day without asking for you to renew my mind and choosing to function in the futility of my own thinking. Forgive me for not beginning the day in prayer because I assumed I could muster up sufficient joy and peace without your help. Forgive me for not beginning my day in prayer but rather assuming I could manage my own time productively. Forgive me for not beginning my day in prayer because I had my own agenda to complete and I gave no thought for what you would like me to do today. Forgive me for assuming I don't need to be equipped or empowered by you to make this a successful or worthwhile day of fruitfulness. My prayerlessness makes the assumption that I can behave righteously today without prayer and assumes that I don't need your help. Forgive me for assuming I am a good enough person without your help. Forgive me for my sinful attitudes, my complaints and failure to trust you with my day, my needs, my decisions because of my prayerlessness. Forgive me for weak faith and a mindset that is set upon worldly matters. Forgive me also for not starting out the day praising you and thanking you for your unlimited love for me and other believers. Forgive me for my absorption with myself. What an ungrateful child I am!

Lord, please forgive me for my prayerlessness. I need you daily, moment by moment, for sure. For without you, my actions and thoughts are selfish, self-centered and sinful. I need to daily acknowledge you as my Savior, my hope, my Redeemer, my Lord. I need to begin the day praising you and thanking you. If I truly set my hope in you each day, there should be no place for complaining, anxious thoughts and sinful choices and actions. I need to entrust you with each day's concerns. I want my attitude and thoughts and actions and decisions to be guided and controlled by the Holy Spirit. I need to begin each day by setting my mind on Jesus and prayerfully depending on Jesus, staying close to him all day long. I want the words of Christ to be in my mind and the love of Christ to be behind my actions and the power of Christ to control my selfish and sinful desires and choices. I want to bear fruit that will last!!

In Jesus' Name, I pray, Amen.

Ginger Drake

Testimony #2

Letting Go

If you research “characteristics of a first born child,” you will continually find “controlling” as one of the main traits. As a first born, I am certainly no exception to this rule. Those who know me well know that any trip or vacation I plan involves a carefully organized binder, with multiple tabs, including a detailed daily itinerary. Some have questioned this approach, pointing out that there is something to be said for spontaneity. To which I reply, “Of course! I am all for planned spontaneous fun.”

With this background, perhaps you can understand my initial reaction when I discovered I was pregnant at age 40. This was my fourth pregnancy, and the first one we didn’t “plan.” We had a high schooler, a middle schooler, and an 8 year old. I had been sure our family was complete. I know many women in this situation handle it with grace, joy, and gratitude. How I wish I could say that was my initial reaction, but I felt as if my world had just turned upside down. After all, this was not a part of my plan.

It took a lot of prayer, soul searching and arguing with God in the next few weeks, but I finally reached a place of acceptance and even joy that this was his plan for us. Psalm 40:3 became my theme verse: “He put a new song in my mouth, a song of praise to our God...” This baby would be our new song, a new chapter. When my husband and I shared the news with our kids, they were elated.

And then came my twelve week appointment—there was some concern when the doctor couldn’t hear the heartbeat, and so I was sent for an ultrasound. The doctor was encouraging and said this just happens sometimes, and I prayed all would be well. I was confident that everything was fine. None of my symptoms of pregnancy had changed and it seemed obvious that God had a definite plan for this little one’s life.

However, when I saw that tiny body on the screen, lying motionless, everything changed. The technician grew quiet but it didn’t matter—I already knew. My husband and I were ushered into the doctor’s office, and I sat numbly while the doctor explained what a “missed miscarriage” was. My brain felt disconnected from my body—my body was telling me I was still carrying life inside of me, but my brain knew better now. This is the cruel reality of a missed miscarriage.

The car ride home seemed to take forever, yet I was in no hurry to face the kids and share this with them. Our kids grieved with us, and needed to process all of this with me, especially our youngest. She had so wanted to be an older sister and relinquish her title as the youngest. It was not an easy time.

And if I had been emotional when I first found out I was pregnant, that was nothing compared to my feelings after seeing the ultrasound. I was in anguish. “Why would God put me and my family through all of this? Why would he create new life, put us through all those emotions, knowing he would take it away?” It seemed cruel and heartless—and so pointless. I was angry, and I wanted answers. God at least owed me an explanation. At least that’s how I felt at the time.

Life went on, but I continued to wrestle with “the why” of all of this. I felt that if I could at least have an answer to why this happened, then and only then could I move on and heal. I continually thought of potential reasons why God might have planned this. Maybe this was so our kids would have the sanctity of life firmly impressed on them. We named our baby Carmen, which means “song.” Years later, I would find that our youngest had written Carmen’s name in the front of her Bible, along with the rest of our family’s name: Carmen had definitely made an impact on our family.

If you live long enough, you will find yourself in a circumstance where you are asking God “Why?” It may not be a miscarriage, but it may be another type of loss, a debilitating illness, a stressful situation with no end in sight, a strained relationship, or an unfulfilled hope. I am so grateful for the many Psalms of David that demonstrate him questioning God, asking “why,” or “how long.” Psalm 22 and Psalm 13 come to mind. Many

of these Psalms start with gut wrenching questions and end with a praise. David was able to shift his gaze from his circumstances to his Father, trust in him and find rest. I wanted to do that too, but I felt stuck in the questioning phase, convinced I could not move on until God answered my question, “Why?” I know many were praying for us during this time, and I will always be grateful for that. And I will always be amazed at the means God used to move me out of the questioning phase.

One day, I was taking my 12 lb dog, Pepper, for a walk. Out of the blue, she picked up a heavy stick that was larger than she was. In the thirteen years that we have had her, she has only picked up a stick once. On that day, I watched her as she struggled to continue to walk beside me while awkwardly holding tightly onto that stick. The stick created distance between us. Eventually she gave up, dropped the stick, and walked right beside me again, at her normal pace.

And in that moment, I knew the Holy Spirit was quietly speaking to me, “That’s you. You haven’t stopped walking with me, but you’re holding so tightly onto this stick—this question of ‘Why?’ And that is keeping you from walking closely beside me. Things feel awkward for you, I seem distant from you, but I haven’t moved, I have never left your side.” And in that moment, I decided to lay my stick down. To resume a closer walk with my Savior, trusting him even when my questions and prayers went unanswered. And that whole situation, more than anything in my life so far, has taught me who is really in control of my life. It’s not me. And for that, I am grateful. There is freedom and peace in learning to let go of the need to know why and leaning on the One who is before all things and holds all things together.

“When you pass through the waters, I will be with you; and through the rivers, they shall not overwhelm you; when you walk through fire you shall not be burned, and the flame shall not consume you.” Isaiah 43:2 ESV

Lara Bruesewitz

Testimony #3

The Power of Prayer

Read Psalm 5:1-3

Prayer is a powerful thing. When we talk to God, we need to remember that everything happens in His time, according to His plan. Sometimes bad things happen, leaving us wondering “why?” but I have found that it is through hard times that I depend on God the most. One experience in my life that really taught me at a young age about the power of prayer was when my grandma was in the hospital my sophomore year of high school.

It was a cold November night. My family and I were on our way to Jeffersonville for the weekend for a mini vacation and college visit for Tim and I. At dinner my dad’s cell phone rang. My Aunt Sharon was calling to tell us that my Grandma Lee had fallen out of her bed and had been rushed to the hospital because of severe bleeding. She had been on blood-thinners because of a minor stroke a few weeks before. My Aunt said that we should continue our weekend vacation as planned, and she would call if anything else happened.

In the silent drive to the hotel, questions raced through my mind. “How can this be happening? Why?” I wondered how my grandma was doing. We continued our vacation as planned and when we got back from the pool we found out that my dad had left for the hospital. My grandma had been rushed into the ER and had been given her last rights. She was dying. The doctor performed surgery, but there wasn’t much he could do, for her body temp. was decreasing rapidly. Later we found out that she had Toxic Colitis, a condition where part of the colon twists and dies, and the bacteria is released into the bloodstream. The doctor didn’t expect her to make it through surgery. A river of tears flooded my eyes and I found it hard to breathe. We sat in a circle in our hotel room and prayed while my great-uncle Bill made the trip to take the rest of us to the hospital.

Around midnight we entered a large waiting room. Aunts, uncles, cousins, and friends filled the room, everyone crying, giving hugs, and speaking words of comfort to one another. The doctor came every few hours to give us an update. But what I remember most vividly was that the waiting room became a place of prayer. My grandpa Ed had previously been an alcoholic and he had stopped drinking while in Alcoholics Anonymous. He had been sober for over twenty years and continued in AA helping others to stop drinking. Many of his friends from AA were in the waiting room that night. They were there to support and comfort him in his time of need, just as he had comforted and supported them through theirs. A man named Brent led us in prayer. It was so encouraging to see so many people all come together and pray for my family. I could feel the Holy Spirit working in my heart and in the hearts of everyone in the waiting room (Matthew 18:20).

After 45 long days in the hospital, my grandma was allowed to come back home. Her doctors were amazed, they said that there was no medical reason she could have survived this and that it was nothing short of a miracle! When we had almost lost all hope, God answered our prayers - in His timing and according to His plan. Through this experience God taught me just how powerful prayer can be, and how important it is to trust in Him in *all* circumstances.

Katie Lutz

Testimony #4

Making a Difference

When I was the night nurse on a rehab unit, I would pray that God would use me to make a difference in my patients' lives. Of course He always did, but it was often in small ways and unnoticed at the time.

One evening, though, my prayer was answered in a very obvious way. Mr. R was a new-to-me patient and a former pastor. As I entered his room for evening meds, he was tearful and agitated. Frantically he exclaimed, "You're my nurse so you are in authority over me. I need to confess my sins!" Before I could say anything, he began to pour out his heart to God. After several minutes I found myself speaking words of comfort to him, scripture regarding forgiveness which I wasn't even sure that I had memorized once upon a time. It was truly one of those times as Jesus promised in which the Holy Spirit would give us the words to speak. Mr. R.'s soul was comforted and he was able to sleep peacefully through the night.

Madonna Rice

Testimony #5

MEDLEY OF SCRIPTURES – COMFORT, CONFIDENCE, REFLECTION

The past few years have brought unexpected health issues. I remember when I was told I would need a liver transplant. The Lord has brought healing to my liver and restored its functioning, and I am in awe of His goodness that he has shown to me. I am very thankful for God's hand of mercy and grace bestowed upon me. "For I will restore you to health and I will heal you of your wounds." Jeremiah 30:17

Jesus holds tomorrow and He held me through years of unexpected health circumstances and he will continue to guide me into a deeper prayer life.

"He has made everything appropriate in its time. He has also set eternity in their heart, yet so that man will not find out the work which God has done from the beginning even to the end." Ecclesiastes 3:11

Psalm 46:1-7 is another scripture that comforted me. I found my constant peace, security, and trusted stronghold in Jesus, my forever friend.

It was knowing that people were faithfully praying and sending me scriptures that filled my spirit with God's everlasting presence. These verses were knitted into my mind and heart. Ecclesiastes 9:16-17 reminds us that digging into God's word brings wisdom.

These are a few scriptures shared with me and I hope will bring joy to your spirit:

Psalm 9: 9-10, Psalm 91:1-2, Psalm 95:2, Psalm 31:7, Proverbs 4:26, Psalm 29:11, Luke 12:5-7, 2 Corinthians 9:14-15, John 10:10, Isaiah 43:18-19, 1 John 5:14

I also learned to find contentment in worshiping through coloring and praying scriptures.

True peace isn't found in control—it's found in daily time with Jesus. Reading, studying, praying, and staying constant in God's Word will see me through the things that come my way. "Apart from me you can do nothing" John 15:5. Remembering the importance of this, of letting God into my life daily and continually, has been good for me to review, a reminder to not become lazy with my time with the Lord.

"Call upon me and come and pray to me and I will listen to you." Jeremiah 29:12

Marci Davis

Testimony #6

Unanswered Prayer

It has been my privilege throughout my ministry to pray for many members of our body, often with the Elder board as we have been sought out for prayer. All manner of requests have come to us and I have witnessed many answered prayers. Some have been dramatic. Praying for a young boy in our Church family years ago who had had cancer for a time and right after we prayed he went into remission. More recent prayers were for Mike Bowling, Tony Zubrowski, and Jim Emig. Yes, Jim has gone home to be with our Lord and he never really fully recovered, but we witnessed many answers as we prayed for him. I have also prayed for the salvation of numerous people and it has been a real joy when some of them have come to Jesus.

At the same time I have prayed many prayers over the years that God answered, “Not now,” or just plain “no.” Those have always been hard, but it comes down to recognizing as Jesus taught us to pray, “Your kingdom come, your will be done” **Matthew 6:10**. The truth is, frequently enough, even when not meaning to, I have prayed for something I wanted, and often enough even things that seemed consistent with God’s will, but the answer was still “no.” God’s will is higher, and sometimes a good bit more mysterious than we imagine. He frequently is at work in ways that we just do not see or understand. There are plenty of times that we don’t get explanations from God, just the reminder that He is God and He always knows what He is doing. The example of Job leaps to mind.

God sometimes answers “not now.” We may not even recognize this answer at the time. I think of the Apostle Paul wanting to come to minister in Rome, **Romans 1:10**. For some time God’s answer appeared to be “no.” Really it was “not yet.” Our timetable is often not God’s. God answered Paul’s prayer to get to Rome, but not in the way that Paul imagined. Paul was arrested and put on trial in Jerusalem. He was imprisoned and eventually shipwrecked; coming to Rome as a prisoner in chains. This adversity in Paul’s life was a tremendous encouragement to the believers in Rome and throughout the empire. God often strengthens others for tasks and challenges they must face, through our suffering or hardship or loss. We may not see the point of the trials and difficulties we are entangled in; perhaps because the purpose is bigger than just ourselves. Can we trust God when we don’t know why something has happened to us, that He is using it for our own good; but perhaps even more, that He is using it for the blessing and benefit of others?

The thing we must always ask ourselves when we pray is do we believe **Romans 8:28**? Do we really trust that He will always do what is best for us and for those we pray for who love Him? If we do, a “no” answer is not threatening. Indeed, it is far better than a yes answer when what we are praying for is not actually the best, even when we are convinced it is. We must always pray, and we must always pray to the best of our understanding, for what we perceive is according to His will. However, thank God we are not the final arbiters of what His will is. He is.

Prayer is vitally important in our relationship with our Lord. He wants us to do it unceasingly, **1 Thessalonians 5:17**, and as I have counseled many people over the years I think God means that literally. So much effective prayer is consulting him very quickly all the time in short requests faster than we can even speak them out loud. Staying in touch with God always, about everything is a good thing. He knows the number of hairs on our heads, and He cares about all the details of our lives. He wants the personal, intimate relationship with us that prayer affords, and because He is God, He can do that with all of us at the same time.

You’ve probably heard it. Prayer is more about what happens to us when we pray than it is about getting our requests met. Prayer is humbling. It is about our dependence on Him, and always about His glory. So always pray. When you can, pray with other believers. We’d love to have you join us on Thursday evenings at

Church. Just always look for e-mail confirmation as we sometimes are unable to meet on the occasional Thursday. If I don't have your e-mail to let you know, give it to me.

Unanswered prayer can be challenging, but we know God always hears us, and He does what is best. Praying is an important part of our relationship with Him. If you don't talk to those you love, what does that say about you?

I ran across a prayer years ago that I thought was helpful when we get a "no" answer. I think it is worth your reading it. It was a prayer by a woman named Claudia Weisz, the mother of a Rhett Syndrome child. Perhaps it may help reorient your perspective when God's answer is "no." You may want to challenge a line or two in it, but I think as a whole it is helpful.

I asked God to take away my pride. And God said, "No." He said it was not for Him to take away, but for me to give up. I asked God to make my handicapped child whole. And God said, "No." He said her spirit was whole, her body was only temporary. I asked God to grant me patience. And God said, "No." He said patience is a by-product of tribulations. It isn't granted, it is earned. I asked God to give me happiness. And God said, "No." He said He gives me blessings, happiness is up to me. I asked God to spare me pain. And God said, "No." He said suffering draws me apart from worldly cares and brings me closer to Him. I asked God to make my spirit grow. And God said, "No." He said I must grow on my own. But He will prune me to make me fruitful. I asked God for all things that I might enjoy life. And God said, "No." He said He will give me life, that I may enjoy all things. I asked God to help me love others, as much as He loves me. And God said, "Ah, *finally you have the idea!*"

Aways pray. God always answers. Sometimes it isn't the answer we wanted. The question is, do we really want His will over our own? Do we really want what is best or do we just want what we want?

Pastor John Grossmann

Testimony # 7

Two Prayers - One Answer

Most of you know me. I'm that church guy who wears a smile most of the time, husband of a beautiful woman, father to five and grandfather to 20. I'm also that guy that plays the drums occasionally at worship. You may think, "Yeah, he's got it all together, what a great life he has."

Yes, my life NOW is wonderful and full of blessings and wonderful people, all of you included. But it hasn't always been this good. In fact, for a while my life was rudderless and damaged beyond repair. Or so I thought.

I was reared in a traditional Christian home where we attended church three times a week and always blessed our food before eating. But my father was a tyrant who was a good man on Sundays but hell on wheels the rest of the week. He passed away 13 years ago but before he did, we mended our relationship and the last 25 years of his life were really good for us both.

I was saved at 15, during my freshman year. I was a bit of a "wall flower" during high school. I love to write and as a school newspaper member, I got the opportunity to write all the time. School was easy for me, I played in the band and had after school sports activities (I covered them for the school newspaper). My life was good and I didn't need female companionship. I had many friends that were girls but had only one date in high school and she asked me!

During my college years, I continued my writing, loving sports, doing research at the library (no internet at that time) and enjoying Christian friends at the local Bible Chair.

During this time, my relationship with my Lord was tenuous at best. It was a give and take kind of thing - "I've got this Lord, You can be seated... Oh help, Lord, I messed up again and need your guidance...No, I've got this again. Please be seated." Sound familiar?

An incident occurred during my senior year that changed my world and eventually my life. I was totally responsible for my actions. The "what" is not important but it is part of the story. Needless to say I said to the Lord, "Okay I've messed up my life so bad even You can't fix it BUT I will never fight you for it again. Do with my life what you want." Little did I know that this is what He was waiting for.

A month later two college professors told me that I might be a candidate for graduate school. "Ohio University would be a great fit for you," they said.

So in September 1976, I loaded up my car, left Texas and drove 1200 miles to Ohio. Upon entering Athens, I found a church to visit. This was a Thursday, so my first visit would be Sunday. So, here's the plan - register for classes and start working toward earning my Masters degree / get the degree and move right back to Texas / find work and have a good career and when I'm about 32, I'll settle down and get married and maybe have some kids. Don't laugh, it was a good plan. Just not His plan.

Early that Sunday morning, the Lord gave me a vision of something very unusual. This vision was me introducing my Texas friends to my girlfriend. She had long dark hair and big beautiful blue eyes. I said, "Amy and Andy, I want you to meet my girlfriend Dianne!" When I awoke, I thought that that was weird and thought nothing further. I know, I'm a bit dense. But God works with what we give Him and He can make beauty from ashes.

Later that morning when I arrived at church, I was ushered into the young adult Sunday school class and was introduced to the group. The seat on my right stayed empty UNTIL a young woman came a few minutes later and sat down. We noticed each other and exchanged smiles. During the class discussion, the young lady made a comment and one of the guys there said, "That's a really good comment, Dianne."

As I looked at her, I realized this was the woman I had dreamed about the night before. I immediately started a "heart conversation" with the Lord about my failures with women and didn't want my heart broken again. This was not part of my plan. He said to me, "Do you remember our conversation last year where you told me I could have your life and do what I wanted with it?" I understood what He meant so I said, "Yes sir." He said, "Okay then."

Unknown to me, Dianne had her heart broken many times and was done with men. She said to the Lord, "I thought you always wanted me to be a wife and mom, but I guess not. I will be happy being alone serving you, Lord, but IF you want me to be a wife and mom, You will have to bring the man to me and prove to me You sent him." She prayed that prayer three weeks before we met in that church.

We both knew from that moment that we were going to be important to each other but had no clue what the Lord wanted. Two weeks after that meeting, I told Dianne I loved her and the next week I asked her to marry me. It took her twenty-four hours to say YES, but she did! I knew she would. God had told me earlier that week.

At that moment, we both realized that a committed life to His work is what we both wanted. Two prayers - one answer. One took a year and the other took three weeks. But as long as He was in charge, we didn't care.

Now 48 years of marriage later, five godly children, five godly spouses, and 20 grandchildren being raised in godly homes is our life. We feel extremely blessed by Him. It hasn't always been easy but it has been God led. Why? Because He answers our prayers. It might be through His word, through other people, through a "heart conversation," or by verbalizing His desires directly to us. We've had all four in our lifetime. Every time we are at a crossroads, we ask Him to guide us through and He does.

In Ezekiel 37:3, God set Ezekiel down in the middle of the valley of Dry Bones and asked "Son of man, can these bones live?" Ezekiel's reply was "Oh Lord God, You know!" That should be our answer every time He calls on us to serve. He will never let you down! Go ahead and try. You will love the results!

Steve Connell

Testimony #8

I Felt That Peace

I felt that Peace! It was Wednesday, November 22, 2018 at 12:00pm, the day before Thanksgiving, when I got a call from my doctor that said, "Your brain biopsy shows you have CANCER". I didn't cry, I didn't scream, I didn't say there must be a mistake. No, my response was "Thank God, we have a diagnosis." You see, I had been sick for 2 years already, had all kinds of blood tests, CT's, MRI's, PET Scan, bilateral arterial surgeries, spinal taps, lots of medication. Being on 90mg prednisone most of that time. And no answers as to why I was so sick. I thought, am I just going crazy?

That same day the oncologist office at UCMC called me and said Dr. Tarik Latif, the top oncologist would see me after his last appointment of the day. I knew right away, I was going to like this doctor. Who sees a new patient after their last patient of the day, the day before Thanksgiving! A caring Oncologist who understands how scary hearing Cancer can be. And of course we went. He was so kind, looked me straight in the eye and said, "I have a plan of treatment". That moment I knew I was going to be okay and God was going to be with me every step of the way!

And the journey began! I had a rare blood disease (a type of Lymphoma) in my brain called CNS (Central Nervous System). Turns out that's what was causing the debilitating vertigo, the annoying double vision in my right eye, and the sudden hearing loss in my right ear, just to name a few.

After 12 hospitalizations (each lasting a week) over 6 months, while being hit with 5 different kinds of chemotherapy, blood transfusions, loss of hair, and loss of strength, and being covered in prayer, I beat that Cancer. Prayer warriors in churches all over the country were praying on my behalf. And God heard your prayers and healed me. For that I will be forever grateful!

Through our prayer chain at Grace we have a wonderful opportunity to lift each other's needs to the Lord. God loves to use ordinary people to pray and care for each other. That's what brings us closer as a family and closer to God.

If you have a need today, tell God what it is. Trust in His provision, He promised to meet our needs (Phil. 4:19) *my God shall supply all your needs according to His riches in glory in Christ Jesus.* And to give us peace (Phil. 4:7), *And the peace of God, which surpasses all understanding, will guard your hearts and your minds in Christ Jesus.*

Barb Rudolph

Testimony 9

Game Changer: When I Learned God Loved Me

There was a time when I did not understand God's love for me, or his love for others. I understood we were sinners and I understood sinners didn't deserve God's love. I knew John 3:16. "For God so loved the world...". I had head knowledge that God loved believers and that believers were to love him, but I couldn't comprehend what that meant. I had no heart knowledge of God's love. I began to prayerfully ask God to help me understand his love for me, a sinner. My understanding didn't happen overnight. I prayed repeatedly (Luke 18:1). One day, I read 1 John 4:8,16 "God is love." And then it hit me with a strong realization that God's character is love. God can't help it, He loves everybody, because it is his nature to love. That idea astounded me! I realized he loved his creation. I learned his love is perfect. In fact, his love is so perfect that we, his children, never need to fear anything (1 John 4:18). That new understanding, fueled an excitement to know Jesus better, to read my Bible more, and to believe and obey the principles found in the Bible.

Next, God revealed to me that believers are taught and sanctified by the Holy Spirit, so it was the Holy Spirit who revealed the truth of God's love to me and the many other truths I was learning. 1 Corinthians 2:12-14: *"What we (believers) have received is not the spirit of the world, but the Spirit who is from God, so that we may understand what God has freely given us. This is what we speak, not in words taught us by human wisdom but in words taught by the Spirit, explaining spiritual realities with Spirit-taught words. The person without the Spirit does not accept the things that come from the Spirit of God but considers them foolishness, and cannot understand them because they are discerned only through the Spirit."* Romans 5:5: *"This hope doesn't put us to shame, because the love of God has been poured out in our hearts through the Holy Spirit, who has been given to us."*

God revealed to me that I needed to pray and ask him to teach me about the things I didn't know or understand. Slowly, God brought other bible verses to my attention to deepen my understanding of His love for redeemed sinners like me. Again, nothing happened quickly, but my understanding grew at a speed in which I could process, retain, and build upon. The Bible verses God brought to my attention were instrumental in deepening my understanding of His love for me, His love for others, and most importantly, I began to understand and believe that God's love for me was wide, long, high and deep (*Ephesians 3:18*); His love was unfailing and steadfast. (*Job 10:12, Psalm 107:43, Psalm 13:5*) a love that I could depend upon. It was a love that would never be taken from me. (*Romans 8:38-39*). I came to believe that God's love for me (personally....and for other believers) was a love I could depend upon for my safety, my death/life, for hardship, for hurt feelings, for evil intent from others, for suffering, for everything. God is so loving, that His plan for my life is better than any plan I could come up with. I began to know that doing things God's way (obedience) kept me close to Him and safe (*James 4:8 Come near to God and he will come near to you.*") I began believing and remembering the truths expressed in Bible verses that reinforced what I had learned. I began to understand that when hardship, suffering, injury, etc occurred in my life, I could trust God with the outcome. I didn't question God's love for me or demand God do things my way, but I came to believe and trust "it must be for my good, or it was needful to deepen my faith, etc." *Romans 8:28: "For we know that in all things God works for the good of those who love him, who have been called according to His purpose."*

Over the years, through the ups and downs of life, God has faithfully taught me and guided me (it was personal), to gain answers to my many questions, reemphasizing to me his incredibly loving kindness and grace, his mercy, and forgiveness for me and all believers. (*1 Timothy 1:14*). I learned God protects us and provides everything for us (*Philippians 4:19*). He gives us good gifts for our enjoyment (*1 Timothy 6:17; James 1:17*). He teaches and guides us (*John 16:13; 1 Corinthians 2:12-13*). He works on our behalf while we trust Him to help us (*Isaiah 46:4*). He keeps us safe (*Deuteronomy 31:6; Psalm 121:7-8*). He responds to our prayers out of love for us and for our good (*Luke 18:1; Hebrews 4:16, Romans 8:28*). He is preparing a home for us in heaven (*John 14:2*). He has a plan for our lives (*Jeremiah 29:11, Philippians 1:6, Psalm 138:8, Ephesians 2:10*). He has written in the Lamb's book of Life our name and the day we will die and live eternally with Him (*Psalms 139:1-6, 16*). He disciplines us for our good (*Hebrews 12:10*). He tests our faith, disciplines

us, and uses hardship to deepen our faith, deepen our trust in Him, deepen our dependence on Him and deepen our love for Him (James 1:2-4; 1 Peter 1:6-7). God warns us in his Word that we will suffer for righteousness, as Jesus did (1 Peter 1:6-7; 2:18-23; 3:9-18). I learned nothing can interfere with God loving me or interfere with God working on my behalf for my good. I learned that God is orchestrating a personal relationship with me out of His great love for me. He doesn't need me, but like a loving Father, He knows I desperately need Him (Acts 17: 24-25). Everything God does, is motivated by His love, for me, and for all believers.

Ginger Drake

Testimony #10

Only Trust Him

Sometimes prayers are a one and done. For example, “Lord, help this car start.” And a few seconds later the engine is humming. “Thank you, Lord!” Other prayers require more time, perhaps even years with no apparent response. The prayer story that I want to share is a conversation with God that has gone back and forth since 2010. Along the way I have had many questions and God has provided many answers.

After I retired from teaching, I came to a place in which I sensed that God had a new plan for me. I was impacted greatly by Eph. 2:10. “For we are God’s handiwork, created in Christ Jesus to do good works which God prepared in advance for us to do.” What had he prepared for me? I couldn’t wait to find out! I began to pray and slowly over time, I recalled that I had often been touched with concern for people without clean water. I couldn’t imagine what all that life would entail. I began to pray, “Lord, if this is my mission, please show me.” Not much later he did just that. Some of you may remember that we used to have bulletin inserts. These were a sort of newsletter with various articles of interest to Christians. To be honest, most of the time my copies usually just piled up in my Bible or were tossed. But one week I actually began to read. There on the back side of the insert was an article on an organization called Living Water International. Coincidence? I don’t think so! God has a way of placing things in our path that he wants us to notice. So I decided to go to LWI’s website. There are many organizations that dig wells, but LWI had a major difference. I discovered that all that they do is grounded in God’s Word. Providing clean water is a jumping off point to present the gospel – Jesus as the Living Water for your soul. So back to prayer I went. “Ok, God, if I am to get on board with the work of LWI, just what would that look like?” I had a strong sense that he wanted more than a mere donation.

Eventually, the idea to create collages and journals that I could sell came to fruition in my mind. Back to chatting with God. “You know, God, I’ve never done something quite like this. I’m not too sure that I can make anything sellable.” But I trusted in his plan, gathered materials, and began creating. Eventually, I had enough things made, so I invited a select group of ladies to view them and give me feedback. To be honest, I was a little nervous. I made sure to tell the ladies that these were not for sale yet. But the ladies insisted on purchasing many of my items – another prayer answered! So, this pattern continued. I approached God with all of my “excuses.” I was a regular Moses. (see Ex. 3 and 4) Every issue I brought to him, he answered with “Yes, this is what I want you to do. Remember, I prepared it in advance.” So I continued creating, started doing craft shows and this continues to this day. God has blessed my ministry, which I named Waters of Joy based on Is. 12:3, “With joy you will draw water from the wells of salvation.” Over the years he has taught me much about trusting. He has shown me to have compassion for people who live in conditions that are unfathomable to us in America. He has taught me to have gratitude. He has shown me that it’s not only about money donated. It is about his Word being represented. It is about the people that I meet.

I continue to draw near, praying for him to show me what’s next for WOJ. He welcomes my questions and concerns. I lean on the promises of Phil. 4:6-7. “Do not be anxious about anything, but in every situation, by prayer and petition, with thanksgiving, present your requests to God. And the peace of God, which transcends all understanding, will guard your hearts and your minds in Christ Jesus.”

Connie Bryant

Testimony #11

My Wonky Heart

It was the fall of 2003 when I was getting a physical for some life insurance. Our son John was still in medical school and asked the technician if he could have a copy of the readout. The next day he called our doctor and told him something was wrong with his dad's heart. This began my long journey with my "wonky" heart as my bride called it. After six months of testing, the doctors informed me I had A-Fib or Atrial Fibrillation. Google says this about A-Fib:

AFib is characterized by an irregular and often rapid heartbeat, where the Heart's upper chambers (atria) quiver or fibrillate instead of beating in a coordinated manner.

Mine never hurt - other than being out of breath. And my lips turned blue when my heart raced to 195 bpm. That was a little scary. The first procedure my cardiologist wanted to perform was a cardioversion (basically works like an AED.) This procedure was successful for seven years. My heart stayed in rhythm for that long - still not sure why.

In 2010, my heart jumped back into A-Fib with a vengeance. The doctors performed three ablations, seven more cardioversions and a maze procedure over a twenty year period. It was not fun. I had no energy, my weight ballooned to 310 pounds, I fell asleep every time I sat down and Dianne was so concerned about it that she did most of the driving.

Our busy life never quit during this time - we gave away two daughters in marriage, added 17 grandchildren to the family, fostered children and adopted one, sold our big home and moved into a condo.

In April 2021 I was not able to sleep more than three hours every night, so I would leave the condo and drive until I got sleepy. In the early morning hours of the 14th, I was driving north on Pleasant Avenue and told the Lord that I was tired of the exhaustion, of the constant racing of my heart and all the procedures. I asked Him to remove this from me.

I stopped at the light at Nilles and Pleasant and felt that He would allow this prayer to come true. I turned the corner and was about a 100 feet past the intersection, when a white sheet of copy paper came across my windshield and stayed there. On this paper in the old dot-matrix printer style was the word **GRANTED**. Then it slipped off the windshield and disappeared. I said, "Thank you, Lord!"

That afternoon I had another cardioversion and it got my heart back in rhythm for about three hours. We were not concerned because we knew He was in charge. The next week we left for Gulf Shores to spend a week with family. I was continually tired on the way and on site the first few days. Then I started noticing my heart rate dropping dramatically! On April 14, my average heart rate was 96 bpm but by May 11 it was averaging 57 bpm!

The A-Fib was gone from my body, healed by the Great Physician! My doctor took credit but I know who healed me. Today when we go to the gym, my heart rate increases and then immediately settles back down like normal. I love being normal! And since I'm a drummer, I love being in rhythm!

Why did God heal me? I don't know why. My only reason is Matthew 7:7 when the Lord Jesus was here and spoke to the people by saying, "Ask and you shall receive." My long struggle with the condition and then the miraculous healing happened so I would praise His name and know that whatever I experienced in this life was for His glory!

Steve Connell

Testimony #12

Glasses and The Gospel

This spring I traveled to the Middle East to be part of an evangelistic outreach. The outreach included vision clinics, and many of those whom we served were refugees. As we checked their vision and offered glasses, we listened to their stories. Some had never entered a church before. Abdul (name changed to protect his identity), a welder, came in needing glasses to better see the work that he does. He was grateful for the ones we offered, but hesitated. When we gently pressed in, he reluctantly noted that the glasses didn't seem very strong, so they could easily break on the job. So I searched through our inventory and eventually found a more sturdy pair. When my translator looked closely at them he discovered that this pair was made of titanium! (The glasses are purchased at low cost from another ministry and we never know exactly what supply we will get!) Abdul was so happy that we were providing him with what he needed, and he thanked us for seeing and caring for him. We explained that this gift was an expression of how Jesus cares for him, and he was touched.

When we offered to share about Jesus, many were eager to hear. I was so encouraged by the peoples' openness to the gospel, and rejoiced when seven people indicated that they wanted to become followers of Jesus! Since our clinics were offered by local staff and local churches, those who were curious about our faith, and the new believers will continue to receive great care. Not only did the glasses help restore peoples' physical sight, they also brought the person and work of Jesus into focus!

Beth Kuligowski

Fasting

Why should we fast at all? By Pastor Grossmann

For many modern Americans fasting is seen as one of many weight loss methods. This is not the purpose of Biblical Fasting. The Hebrew and Greek words for fasting mean to go without food. Some today practice fasting from television or the internet or social media or cell phone use. These are all commendable but again, they are not what God in His Word means by fasting, which is to refrain from eating for a period of time, to earnestly seek God in prayer.

In the Bible we find people fasting in times of national emergency, for deliverance from danger, for protection, for help in sickness or difficulty, when asking the Lord for special guidance, for grief or mourning over sin, and to humble oneself before God, and drawing near to Him.

One fast in the Old Testament was commanded every year on the Day of Atonement, Leviticus 23:27-28. Some other examples in the Bible: Moses fasted when receiving the Law on Mt. Sinai, Exodus 34:28; Deuteronomy 9:9-10:10. Daniel observed a partial fast for 21 days, after which God gave him important revelation about the future, Daniel 9-10. Hannah, desperate for a child, sought God in prayer and fasting, and He answered her with the birth of Samuel, 1 Samuel 1:1-20. Ezra proclaimed a fast among the Jewish exiles to ask God for safety and protection as they journeyed back to Israel, Ezra 8:21-23. Nehemiah prayed and fasted and the Lord commissioned him to return to Jerusalem and rebuild the city walls, Nehemiah 1:1-2:8. Queen Esther called her people, the Jews, to fast and pray to prevent impending destruction, Esther 4:16. King Jehoshaphat called for a time of national fasting and prayer, 2 Chronicles 20:3, in the face of a vast army marching on Judah to attack. God answered with an extraordinary deliverance. The Prophetess Anna who delivered a message to Mary and Joseph, did not depart from the Temple, worshipping with fasting and prayer, day and night, Luke 2:37. Preparing for His public ministry, Jesus fasted for 40 Days, and to ward off the devil's temptations, Matthew 4:1-11.

Jesus expected His followers would fast, Matthew 9:14-15, and promised blessing if we do so with proper motives, Matthew 6:16-18, just as He rewards those who pray with proper motives, Matthew 6:5-6.

After being blinded Saul of Tarsus fasted for 3 days. Jesus sent Ananias to pray for him, to recover his sight, be baptized and filled with the Holy Spirit, Acts 9:1-19. The launching of the First Missionary Journey from the Church in Antioch in which Paul and Barnabas and three friends went out, was preceded by their worshipping and fasting and the Holy Spirit proclaiming that they be set apart for this work, Acts 13:1-2. The Church fasted and prayed and sent them off. They established churches and appointed Elders with fasting and prayer, Acts 14:23.

Over time fasting became improperly formalized in the Church, emphasizing form, ritual and liturgy. It was practiced legalistically by many seeing fasting as something done for God, in which God is then obligated to do something for the one fasting. The Catholic Church established obligatory fast days, which the Protestant Reformers rejected, although they retained fasting itself as a valuable practice.

Consider various reasons to fast. To humble ourselves and subdue the flesh and draw near to God, Psalm 69:10; 35:13. Fast to repent of sin, asking God to break its power in your life. Fast to resist demonic temptation and attack. Fast seeking the Spirit's vision, guidance and empowerment for ministry, Acts 13:1-4. Fast to seek deliverance for the oppressed, Isaiah 58:6. Fast for the revival of the people of God or the Church, 2 Chronicles 7:14. Fast for national repentance and mercy in the face of God's warning of judgment, as was the case in Nineveh, Jonah 3.

Warning: Beware in fasting of thinking you are more spiritual than those who do not fast, and the hypocrisy of seeking to impress others with the fact that you have fasted. Fasting earns us nothing with God, but He is delighted when we fast with proper motives.