



DAYS OF PRAYER & FASTING

JAN 5-18

Prayer & Fasting Guide

C.S. Lewis

“Prayer in the sense of petition, asking for things, is a small part of it; adoration is the main work of prayer.”

A.W. Tozer

“We need never shout across the spaces to an absent God. He is nearer than our own soul.”

Andrew Murray

“Prayer is the breath of life to the Christian.”





Church family,

As we step into a new year, we want to invite you to slow down with us and give these next fourteen days to prayer and fasting. We believe God meets us in simple, honest moments, and this guide is meant to help you create space to be with Him in a way that feels real and doable.

Our hope is that these days become more than a routine. We want them to stir your hunger for God, shape the way you listen for His voice, and remind you that you're not walking into a new year alone. Prayer has a way of grounding us, steadying us, and pulling our hearts back to the One who already knows what we need long before we ask.

Wherever you're starting from, whether prayer feels familiar or new, take a step with us. Open your Bible, quiet your mind, and see what God might want to grow in you over these days. We're believing with you for clarity, renewal, and a deeper awareness of God's presence in your life.

We're grateful to walk this journey as your pastors, and we're excited to see how God moves as we seek Him together.

**With love,
Pastors Josh and Brittani O'Connor**



Why Pray?

Prayer is one of the most powerful things we can do, yet many people never learn how to pray or don't pray very often. And, as we so frequently do, when we view prayer as simply a religious habit, it feels even more intimidating. You see, God deeply desires a close relationship with us, and prayer is the primary way we connect with Him.

Jesus shows us that prayer is staying close to Him—like a branch staying connected to the vine. Without prayer, we drift away from the One who gives us life and strength. Jesus said, “Apart from me you can do nothing” (John 15:5).

When Jesus taught the disciples to pray, He began with “Our Father,” showing us that prayer is talking with a loving Father who cares for us. Prayer also changes us. As we spend time with God, He shapes our hearts and helps us become more like Christ.

We also pray because God uses our prayers to do His work in the world. Our prayers make a difference. E.M. Bounds once said that God “shapes the world by prayer.” When we pray, we join God in His mission and invite His power into our lives and into the lives of others.

We pray because we depend on God. We pray because prayer moves God's heart and shapes ours.



How to Pray?

There's no specific formula for talking with God, but the church has used the Lord's Prayer as a helpful model for centuries.

Jesus provided this model as an outline to teach us how to pray in a way that connects us to God, aligns our priorities with His, and helps us live dependently on Him.

This model takes us through each part of the Lord's Prayer, showing us how to pray the way Jesus instructed in Scripture.

One day Jesus was praying in a certain place. When He finished, one of His disciples said to Him, "Lord, teach us to pray..."

Luke 11:1 ESV

"Pray then like this:

'Our Father in heaven,
hallowed be your name.
Your kingdom come,
your will be done,
on earth as it is in heaven.
Give us this day our daily bread,
and forgive us our debts,
as we also have forgiven our debtors.
And lead us not into temptation,
but deliver us from evil.'"

Matthew 6:9-13 ESV

Connect with God Relationally

“Our Father in heaven...”

“For you did not receive the spirit of slavery to fall back into fear, but you have received the Spirit of adoption as sons, by whom we cry, ‘Abba! Father!’”

Romans 8:15 ESV

God loves for us to come to Him in this way—as His children who love Him and want to spend time with Him. Proclaim your personal relationship with God, addressing Him as your loving Father and thanking Him that you are His child.

Worship His Name

“Hallowed be your name...”

There is power in God's name. Here is a list of some of His names to help us worship Him specifically and personally:

- God is Righteousness—He makes me clean
- God is Sanctifier—He has called me and set me apart
- God is Healer—He heals all my diseases
- God is Banner of Victory—He defeated my enemies
- God is Shepherd—He speaks to me and leads me
- God is Peace—He is my peace in every storm
- God is Provider—He supplies all of my needs

The name of the LORD is a strong tower; the righteous man runs into it and is safe.

Proverbs 18:10 ESV

Speak God's names out loud. When we proclaim who He is, we not only worship Him, but we also remind ourselves how powerful and great He is.

Pray His Agenda First

*“Your kingdom come,
your will be done,
on earth as it is in heaven.”*

We know God's will is perfect, and we acknowledge His wisdom and sovereignty when we pray His agenda first.

He will always give you all you need from day to day if you will make the Kingdom of God your primary concern.
Luke 12:31 TLB

Spend time focusing on what God is focused on.

His priorities include:

- The whole world to know Jesus
- Blessing for those in authority—parental, spiritual, governmental, work-related, school
- Caring for the poor
- The Church around the world
- Freedom for those in bondage
- Accomplishing His purpose in our lives

Depend on Him for Everything

“...give us this day our daily bread...”

God promises to supply all our needs, and He wants us to trust Him to provide.

I look up to the mountains—does my help come from there? My help comes from the LORD, who made Heaven and earth!

Psalms 121:1-2 NLT

Ask God for what you need today. Bring your requests to Him, and trust Him enough to hand them over to Him fully. It may help to open your hands before God to physically show your surrender to Him. Problems can either be ours or God's; they can't be both.

Prayer Focus Areas

- Surrender
- Renewal
- Obedience
- Hunger for His Word
- Revival in our Church
- Salvation for Our City
- The Next Generation
- Healing
- Wisdom
- Unity

Forgive and Be Forgiven

*“...forgive us our debts,
as we also have forgiven our debtors....”*

When we turn away from our sins and receive His forgiveness, our hearts are more prepared to forgive others as well.

If we confess our sins, He is faithful and just and will forgive us our sins and purify us from all unrighteousness.
1 John 1:9 NIV

Ask God to check your heart and life and show you areas where you might need to ask for His forgiveness. Ask Him to forgive you and to help you forgive others.

Engage in Spiritual Warfare

“And lead us not into temptation, but deliver us from evil.”

The Bible makes it clear that we have an enemy who is trying to steal from us, kill us, and destroy us. As we pray, we take our stand against the enemy and fight from a place of victory through Jesus as we're empowered by His Holy Spirit. There is power in God's Word, and every lie the enemy has told us can be replaced with God's truth.

For we do not wrestle against flesh and blood, but against the rulers, against the authorities, against the cosmic powers over this present darkness, against the spiritual forces of evil in the heavenly places.
Ephesians 6:12 ESV

Ask God to show you any lies you're believing or spiritual warfare happening in your life, expose the enemy, and help you understand and receive His truth.

Simply speaking the name of Jesus has great power in the spiritual realm. The Bible tells us in James 4:7 that if we resist the devil, he will flee from us. Through prayer, we can resist him and walk forward in freedom.

Express Faith in God's Power

“For Yours is the kingdom and the power and the glory forever.”

Ending our prayer time by claiming God's authority and power helps focus our minds on the truth and hope of who He is and what He can do.

“Ah, Sovereign LORD, You have made the heavens

and the earth by Your great power and outstretched arm.
Nothing is too hard for You.”
Jeremiah 32:17 NIV

Remind yourself of God’s power and then return to praising Him and declaring your faith in Him:

- “Yours is the Kingdom” – all authority belongs to You
- “Yours is the Power” – all mightiness flows from You
- “Yours is the Glory” – Your victory will be complete



Develop a Daily Prayer Rhythm

There's not one way or a "right" way to do this — you may choose to go on an early morning walk, brew a hot cup of coffee, or lie back before retiring for the evening.

You may pray the Psalms or through the Lord's prayer.

You may do this before the sun rises or as it sets.

Here are a couple of suggestions:

1. Find a quiet place that is distraction-free.

- This could be a corner in your home, a nearby park, or in your vehicle on lunch break. Find somewhere that you can focus and be at peace.

2. Find a quiet time.

- If at all possible, put your phone away in another room.
- For many people, first thing upon waking is the best possible time to do this; but for you, it may be before bed, or while your baby is napping mid-morning, or on a work break.

You can pray for five minutes, or up to an hour — again, that's up to you. The key is: Start where you are, not where you feel you "should" be. If two or three minutes is all you can make happen, start there and take the next step.



Why Fast?

Most of us are used to connecting with God through our minds — by thinking, talking, praying, reading, or hearing teaching and preaching. But few of us are familiar with the practice of fasting, in which we approach God through our stomachs, or bodies as a whole.

In Matthew 6:16, Jesus said, “When you fast” Not “If you fast” He assumed his followers would follow his example by fasting.

For millennia, God’s people have been regularly abstaining from food as a spiritual discipline.

So, what if we are missing out on one of the most essential and powerful of all the practices of Jesus?

Fasting is one of the most formative spiritual practices we have to reintegrate our minds to our bodies and yearn for God with our whole selves in surrender. It is the spiritual discipline tool that helps us get our discipleship into our hungry bodies.

Fasting is a way to set aside our ordinary preoccupations (food, eating, appetite) so that we may focus more on prayer, worship, and intimacy with God.

Fasting sharpens our spiritual hunger and focus. It is a way of saying, “I want You more than food.”

Matthew Henry said: “Fasting is a means whereby we give glory to God by confessing our weakness and owning our entire dependence upon Him.”



Fasting Tips

The definition of fasting is not eating food. While abstinence from other habits (social media, sugar, etc) can be helpful, it's different from the practice of fasting.

- Pick a day or days that work for you. Traditionally, Wednesdays or Fridays have been the most common days of fasting with Christians around the world and throughout church history, as they represent the days Jesus was betrayed and crucified.
- If possible, pick a day to do this together as a group or with your local church; this will help to encourage and enliven your practice. (Many churches will also set aside a specific period of consecutive days to fast corporately, where it is common to abstain from one or more meals each day.)
- Fast until sundown that day, then eat a simple meal in gratitude.
- If a full day is too much for your body or soul, start smaller. Skip breakfast and break the fast at lunch or 3 pm.
- In the time you'd normally be grocery shopping, cooking, eating, or cleaning, give yourself to prayer. Let your desire for food point you to Jesus as you open yourself to him.

- In your dedicated times of prayer, or each time a hunger pang comes, you may want to pray Romans 12:1-2, or simply, “God, I offer my body to you in worship. Please transform me.”
- As you go about your day — your morning commute, caregiving, email, errands — just enjoy God’s company and attempt to open your heart to him all through the day.
- If you’ve never fasted before, you may feel “hangry” or tired. Keep in mind that these symptoms will go away in time if you stick with the practice. You’ll start to feel better, not worse.
- Drink lots of water to stay hydrated.
- If you normally drink coffee to wake up, you may want to still have coffee, but just have it black to avoid a caffeine headache.
- The more time you can give to prayer and reflection, and the less busy you are that day, the better. Make it your goal to slow down the day you fast and be present to your body, and God, as much as you possibly can.
- Traditionally, Christians avoid fasting on the Sabbath or the Lord’s Day, as Sunday is for worship and feasting, not fasting.

Resist the urge to judge your experience. Release thoughts like, “I liked it; I disliked it.” “I felt close to God; I didn’t feel close to God.” Just let the experience of fasting be what it is, and offer it to God.

Remember: The goal is to make fasting a part of your regular life, not try it once or twice, hate it, and never try it again. Start where you are, not where you feel like you should be.

Fasting is simply the physical expression of a heart that hungers for God more than it hungers for anything else, especially food.

And when prayer is joined with fasting, our longing for God is intensified, and we declare with our hearts, minds, and bodies that we are desperate for Him to draw nearer to us.

In this way, the regular practice of fasting becomes the God-given amplifier of our prayer life. It deepens our dependence on Him, sharpens our spiritual focus, and opens our lives in expectation to experience His transforming grace and power like nothing else!



Bible Reading

Bible reading enriches prayer and fasting by giving our hearts language, direction, and truth to anchor us as we seek God.

Scripture reminds you who you are approaching—your Father who loves you—and why you are fasting in the first place.

As you read, the Word shapes your desires and brings clarity to the areas where God is inviting you to repent, trust the gospel, or obey.

It also strengthens your prayers by filling them with God's promises rather than just your feelings.

During fasting, when your body feels weak or distracted, Scripture becomes a steady source of encouragement and focus.

It keeps your mind centered on Christ, helping the fast push you toward communion with Him rather than simply going without food.

In this way, Bible reading becomes not just a companion to prayer and fasting, but a powerful guide that deepens the entire spiritual practice.

If you don't know where to start, Christians have used Psalms as a prayer guide for centuries. Here are some we

suggest as you get going: Psalms 1, 23, 37, 40, 42-43, 63, 84, 86, 103, and 139.

We also recommend a Bible reading plan to help along the way. It can be located at **greenvillefirst.church/bible** - this has proven to be a great tool to help believers dive into different sections of God's word each day!