

JANUARY 6 — 27 2019

# PERSISTENT PURSUIT

21 DAYS OF PRAYER

PRAYER EVENTS | FASTING | BIBLE READING PLAN



## PRAYER GUIDE

*One day Jesus told his disciples a story to show that they should always pray and never give up...*

— Luke 18:1

# Persistent Pursuit // 21 Days of Prayer

/pərˈsɪst(ə)nt/: continuing firmly or obstinately in a course of action in spite of difficulty or opposition.

## **A Note From Pastor Brett:**

*This is an invitation. It could be one of the most important ones you receive this year. It is an invitation to grow in knowing Jesus together. We want to know Him. We want boldness and power to make him known.*

*As we start 2019, we are choosing to draw near to God and persist in prayer. Prayer is not something that always comes easy. More often than not, we are pulled and pushed in many different directions. But with each new year, we want to make a choice together to pursue Jesus and persist in prayer. The more we spend time with Him, the more our lives will be shaped by Him. Together, we have the opportunity to prioritize and orient our focus on knowing Jesus and making Him known. As we make this choice together, it will be a powerful start to the year.*

*"Then Jesus told his disciples a parable to show them that they should always pray and not give up." –Luke 18:1 (NIV)*

*There are snacks, meals, and feasts. There is great benefit to feasts. Feasts, like festivals, don't occur all the time but are special, planned times that occur by intention. They impact our lives and schedules. Consider this January as a "feast" of prayer and liken it to one of the Jewish festivals of the Old Testament where God's people came together to remember God's faithfulness and anticipate His coming. These festivals were built into the traditions and rhythms of the Israelites and in this same spirit, we are adjusting our rhythms to persistently pursue Him together throughout the month of January. You are invited to join us on this worthwhile journey.*

*I believe 2019 is a critical year for our church. I believe that Jesus wants to move in us, through us, and across our city and nation. Imagine if we, all together, lay a foundation of prayer for the year ahead. Imagine if we all say together "Jesus I am not giving up or giving in because I am choosing to persist in knowing you. Count me in!" What could occur? Imagine how excited God will be? This is an invitation to focus on knowing Jesus. This isn't for the experienced or professional pray-ers. This is for all of us – this is for you. Let's practice prayer together. It is going to be fun and it will be better as we engage together.*

*All of life, all for Jesus.*

*–Brett Donald*

*"We will discover that by praying, we learn to pray" – Richard Foster*



CITYLIGHTS CHURCH

# Four Ways to Participate

## 1. Engage with prayer events (see calendar)

- There are numerous corporate times of prayer and Bible reading. For more info, check the website on for each event. Some events are occurring via a video chat called “Zoom” so you can participate from your living room (access the Zoom times via the link posted in the website event).
- Each Friday we have a Prayer Summit for the whole church.
- Life Communities aren’t having regular events because all of our LC’s are engaging in prayer.

## 2. Abstain from media and social media

- You are invited to abstain from social media and media for the 21 days (or you may want to give yourself one day each week for media and abstain the rest of the week). This will be powerful if you do it. A part of saying “yes” to knowing Jesus more in this season is saying “no” to other distractions as we step out trusting that God has more for us. It will be good!
- *To experience something different than our usual we must do something different than our usual.*

## 3. Fasting Fridays: pursuing together

- You are invited to join the broader body in fasting each Friday. See the attached handout for fasting info. Some may do a multi-day fast during the 21 days.
- See the calendar for the theme each Friday so we can unite in fasting and prayer together. Fasting is a powerful practice and an important one for every Jesus-follower to engage in periodically.

## 4. Follow the corporate Bible reading plan

- We can all participate in the same Bible reading plan. You are invited to read the Bible and practice S.H.A.P.E each day. This is a simple but powerful discipline.

*"A Christian ought never to be in such a state of mind that he feels bound to say, "I do not feel that I could pray," or, if he does, let him pray till he feels he can pray. Not to pray because you do not feel fit to pray is like saying, "I will not take medicine because I am too ill." Pray for prayer: pray yourself, by the Spirit's assistance, into a praying frame. It is good to strike when the iron is hot, but some make cold iron hot by striking. We have sometimes eaten till we have gained an appetite, so let us pray till we pray. God will help you in the pursuit of duty, not in the neglect of it." –C. H. Spurgeon, 1908.*



# Bible Reading Plan & Prayer Events Calendar

SUNDAY	MONDAY	TUESDAY	WEDNESDAY	THURSDAY	FRIDAY	SATURDAY
6 <b>PRAYER EXPERIENCE</b> 9:20-9:45 AM	7 <b>PRAYER TRAINING LAB</b> <i>Hearing God: How to read God's word &amp; hear God's word</i> 8:30-9:30 PM (ZOOM CHAT)	8	9 <b>PRAYER EXPERIENCE</b> 6:45-7:30 AM  <b>PRAYER ROOM</b> 8:15-9:15 PM	10	11 <b>FASTING FRIDAY</b> <i>for personal revival &amp; a renewed hunger to know God</i>  <b>PRAYER SUMMIT</b> 6:15-8:00 PM	12
	Luke 2:22-38	Deut. 9:6-21	Genesis 18:16-33	Psalms 27:1-14	Micah 7	1 Kings 18:20-44
13 <b>FAMILY PRAYER EXPERIENCE</b> 9:20-9:45 AM	14 <b>PRAYER TRAINING LAB</b> <i>How to read &amp; study the Bible to encounter God</i> 8:30-9:30 PM (ZOOM CHAT)	15	16 <b>PRAYER EXPERIENCE</b> 6:45-7:30 AM	17 <b>PRAYER EXPERIENCE</b> <i>Bible Reading &amp; Reflection</i> 8:30-9:30 PM (ZOOM CHAT)	18 <b>FASTING FRIDAY</b> <i>for empowerment &amp; boldness from the Spirit to grow as a sent people</i>  <b>PRAYER SUMMIT</b> 6:15-8:00 PM	19
Ephesians 6	Romans 2:1-11	Psalms 51	Job 41, 42:6	Luke 3:1-14	Philippians 2	Deuteronomy 6
20 <b>PRAYER EXPERIENCE</b> 9:20-9:45 AM	21 <b>PRAYER TRAINING LAB</b> <i>Powerful &amp; Effective Prayers: Learn to intercede &amp; pray for others</i> 8:30-9:30 PM (ZOOM CHAT)	22	23 <b>PRAYER EXPERIENCE</b> <i>Prayer Walk</i> 6:45-7:30 AM	24 <b>PRAYER EXPERIENCE</b> <i>Bible Reading &amp; Reflection</i> 8:30-9:30 PM (ZOOM CHAT)	25 <b>FASTING FRIDAY</b> <i>for salvations &amp; baptisms in 2019</i>  <b>PRAYER SUMMIT</b> 6:15-8:00 PM	26
Ephesians 4	Matthew 10	Acts 1:1-14	John 13	John 15	John 20	Psalms 96
27  <b>PRAYER EXPERIENCE</b> 9:20-9:45 AM						
Matthew 28						

*Note: All Prayer Events are at the 34Ten Centre unless it says "Zoom." Zoom Chat is an online video chat room. It takes 5 minutes to download the app onto your computer and is really simple. You can access the link to engage via computer or phone through the event on our church website.*

*"We will never have time for prayer – we must make time" -- Richard Foster*



# Persistent Pursuit: Corporate Reading Plan

*Hi! Welcome to the start of 21 Days of Prayer! We are excited for what God will be saying to you through His Word and your times of S.H.A.P.E. We want you to get the most out of your times of SHAPE, so we've done some prep work here. Here are some guidelines for the reading plan.*

1. Please read the chapter for context if you aren't familiar with the passages or desire to read more. The context will help give some background and inform your reading. If you are rushed, focus on the key verse for the day.
2. Each week is centred around a theme. Week one's theme is Persistence. Each of the readings have stories or principles around persistence. Be on the lookout for that focus as you read and are hearing from God.
3. When hearing from God, to jump start the conversation, ask Him to reveal a warning, command, encouragement, or message.

## WEEK 1: JAN 7-13

**DAY 1** | Luke 2:22-38 (Key verses 36 – 38), Bonus: Read Psalm 1

Imagine waiting a long time for something, hoping for it to happen in your lifetime (like the Canucks winning the Stanley Cup). Or William Wilburforce who waited a long time to see slavery end. That's the story of Simeon and Anna, two devout people, waiting for a long time for Jesus to come. These two amazing people waited for Someone to come, in Anna's case, day and night, worshiping with fasting and prayer. What amazing examples of what it means to wait upon the Lord, waiting for God to bring the fulfilment of His promise!

**DAY 2** | Deut 9:6-21 (Key verses 18-20), Bonus: Read Psalm 2

Last words are important words. Deuteronomy represents Moses' last sermon to the Israelites before they are to enter the Promised Land. Moses, sadly wasn't able to enter because of his own sin (Numbers 20:10-12), wants to remind them of some very important things, including how the Israelites' previous generation, even after witnessing all the miracles that God did in Egypt to free them, in providing for them in the wilderness, they still turned aside from Him. Moses wanted to remind them what prevented God from destroying them.

**DAY 3** | Gen 18:16-33, Bonus: Read Psalm 3

Abraham has just hosted God and angels (Gen 18:1-15) and received great news. Now, God reveals that He has heard a great outcry against Sodom and Gomorrah and that He will destroy it, upon verifying its wickedness. Only problem is his nephew Lot and family live there, and family is family. What unfolds is such a touching scene of Abraham persistently speaking with God to reach a settlement that could potentially save his nephew.



**DAY 4** | Psalm 27:1-14 (Key verses 13-14), Bonus: Read Psalm 4

Imagine getting fired from your job because you were performing too well. Oh, by the way, your boss wants to kill you. You're on the run, hiding from him in the wilderness. That's the story of David, the author of this Psalm. Anointed to be king as a teenager, he was enlisted into King Saul's service as his personal music therapist, and one of his best warriors. Until Saul got jealous of David's success and tried to decorate his wall with David's body pierced by his spear. Twice. David wisely resigned. Psalm 27 represents David's heart in waiting for God to answer his prayer while in hiding.

(Other Bible nerds will note there are other times scholars think that David wrote this. Please look them up as you please :) It won't change the heart of the psalm)

**DAY 5** | Micah 7 (Key verses 1-7), Bonus: Read Psalm 5

Swimming against the current is a difficult job, and even more difficult when your message isn't one most people want to hear. Welcome to Micah's world, where he is speaking out against Israel and Judah, calling out the sins of the nations, but also revealing God's salvation to come. Observe what Micah will do, in spite of what everyone else is doing. He's not going with the flow.

**DAY 6** | 1 Kings 18:20-44b (Key verses 41-44b), James 5:13-18, Bonus: Read Psalm 6

Elijah had just faced down 400 prophets of Ba'al in the ultimate showdown. He utterly crushed them in a show of divine force. Oh wait, no, he didn't. He prayed for God to show up, and God showed up in a spectacular way. After this amazing success, Elijah still prayed persistently for rain to come. In James 5, the author makes it clear the Elijah was human, just as we are. He prayed, and God listened.

**DAY 7** | Ephesians 6 (Key verses 18-20), Bonus: Read Psalm 7

Ephesians is a letter, written by Paul to the Ephesians while Paul is imprisoned in Rome. During this time, Paul would have had a soldier standing guard outside of his door. With his closing statement, Paul powerfully exhorts the Ephesians to "put on the whole armour of God." The first section of armour deal with defensive items and the final pieces are pieces that allow us to go on the offensive.

## WEEK 2: JAN 14-20

Welcome to days 8 through 14! You persisted to this point! Our focus this week is on humility and repentance. Each passage is meant to highlight either a person's response or a principle about humility or repentance. When you are hearing from God, ask Him to reveal a warning, command, teaching or reminder, regarding humility and repentance.

### **DAY 8** | Romans 2:1-11 (Key verse: 4), Bonus: Read Psalm 8

What a heavy passage to start this week! Let's set this up. Paul, the author, is writing a letter to the Romans, one of the clearest presentations of Christian doctrine in all of the Bible. He kicks off the letter by describing the most obvious thing: how broken the world is because of sin (Romans 1:18-32). Then, in chapter 2, he keys in on people who think they are better, just because they don't commit the sins listed in chapter 1, verses 18 to 32. Feel free to read the entirety of chapter 2, as that might help even more with what Paul is saying, holding what some commentators have called "the generally moral" to a higher standard.

### **DAY 9** | Psalm 51. Bonus: Read Psalm 9

This psalm was written after King David was confronted by a prophet named Nathan, because David first committed adultery with a woman named Bathsheba, who was another man's wife, Uriah the Hittite, a loyal and faithful soldier for David. That's bad enough, but eventually, David sends Uriah to his death by placing him where the fighting was the worst, knowing Uriah would most likely die. Then David takes Bathsheba as his own wife. Nathan calls David out on his multiple sins, and David responds with this psalm. For the full story, read 2nd Samuel 11 and 2nd Samuel 12:1-15. For this psalm, observe how David reacts to the prophet's rebuke.

### **DAY 10** | Job 41, 42:6 (Key verses 1-6), Bonus: Read Psalm 10

For the context, feel free to read Job 1 to 41. For the Coles' notes, here they are. Job was a good man, who lost all that he had, wealth, kids and honour. His three friends come to mourn with him, but instead accuse him of living an evil life, because obviously, bad things happen to bad people. Job defends himself, but goes as far as to question God, asking Him to speak up. God shows up in a storm and takes Job on a tour through creation, showing Job the power and majesty of the Creator. In Job 41, God shows off the mighty leviathan. Yet, mysteriously, God never answers Job's accusations, but see Job's response.

### **DAY 11** | Luke 3:1-14 (Key verses 8 – 14), Bonus: Read Psalm 11

In the previous chapters, we get a quick glimpse of Jesus' childhood and His growing up years. In this chapter, we are introduced Jesus' setup man, John the Baptizer (important distinction, as the Baptist denomination wasn't in existence just yet :P) For more on John and his message, read Mark 1, John 1:15, John 1:19-28. As you read Luke 3, observe what John says about the active nature of repentance.

**DAY 12** | Philippians 2 (Key verses 5-11), Bonus: Read Psalm 12

These days, I can't think of navigating without GPS. Today's GPS tells you where there is construction, delays and other things. So how do you go about navigating life as a follower of Jesus? Paul gives some answers in the letter to the Philippians, especially some pertaining to humility. He lays out some life principles all throughout chapter 1 and 2, but he gives the ultimate answer in Jesus and the example He laid out for us.

**DAY 13** | Deut 6 (Key verses 10-13), Bonus: Read Psalm 13

Last week, we saw Moses demonstrate what persistent prayer looks like. This week, in chapter 6, he gives the Israelites a guide on how to stay close to God and inhabiting the Promised Land. In there are principles we can follow to be a humble people.

**DAY 14** | Eph 4 (Key verses 1-4), Bonus: Read Psalm 14

For most team sports, individuals need to come together as a team for the team to have success. For our Jesus-centred family of sent servants, we need to come together to have impact for His kingdom. Paul lays out an exhortation that is a playbook for us to follow as a team and as individuals.



## WEEK 3: JAN 21-27

Yay! Days 15 to 21! You've persisted, you've been through a journey of repentance and humility, and now you're about to embark on a journey of mission! See how Jesus speaks to mission in these passages. We can't wait to see how God will speak to you this week!

**DAY 15** | Matt 10 (Key verses 16-20), Bonus: Read Psalm 15

Coach Carter, Mr. Miyagi, Coach Boone... When their students/teams were about to step into the game, they would launch into inspiring speeches designed to rally and fire up their charges and lead them into victory. Jesus, after demonstrating his power in chapters 8 and 9, is about to send the Twelve Apostles into the mission field on a short term trip. Before sending them out, He launches into a speech, giving them instructions and some sobering thoughts. Jesus, keeping it real.

**DAY 16** | Acts 1:1-14 (Key Verses 6-9), Bonus: Read Psalm 16

Acts is part deux of a two volume series, written by Luke: the gospel of Luke and the book of Acts. Luke gives a quick rundown of his previous book, giving an overview of Jesus' life, death and resurrection. In this passage, we hear Jesus' final words before ascending into heaven, giving the apostles their marching orders for world domination. Not exactly, but sort of.

**DAY 17** | John 13 (Key verses 33-35), Bonus: Read Psalm 17

In the preceding chapters, Jesus has made some audacious statements, performed an amazing miracle (raising Lazarus from the dead), and entered Jerusalem as a king might in a time of peace. Needless to say, some powerful people were not pleased and were ready to kill Him. Which was part of the plan, as you'll read in chapter 13. More than that, as Jesus is getting ready to leave the world, He leaves the disciples with some important words, such as a new commandment.

**DAY 18** | John 15 (Key verses 4-5), Bonus: Read Psalm 18

When you look back at the gospels and all that the disciples were witnessing, and what Jesus would be commissioning them to do, you're well justified in thinking it's impossible to do. How do you reach a hostile world with a message they do not want to hear? Jesus knew this and that's why he would speak to that in our passage for today.

**DAY 19** | John 20 (Key Verses 19-22), Bonus: Read Psalm 19

When the most important person in your life isn't there anymore, when the person who gave you purpose for the past three years is gone, those are dark days. John 18 – 19 details the Passion of the Christ, the final hours of Jesus' life. For the disciples, their Master was gone, killed in the most cursed way, and likely, they would be also be hunted down. Fortunately, for them and for us, the story doesn't end there, and you'll see that the disciples time to step up will come.



**DAY 20** | Psalm 96 (Key verses 1-7), Bonus: Read Psalm 20

If you're like me, you might be wondering "How do I share about Jesus to other people? What would I talk about?" This Psalm, written by David, gives us a clue.

**DAY 21** | Matt 28 (Key verses 18-20), Bonus: Read Psalm 21

Gandalf, Batman, Neo... what do these fictional characters have in common? They experience a literal or figurative death, but rise again. The hero of the story can't die, and Jesus, being the hero of the Story, will not remain dead. And He doesn't come back to finish telling everyone (the whole world) about the gospel. Actually, He's passing that off to someone else.



# What should I pray for?

*As we press into prayer in our personal lives, God has a way of steering our attention to the needs around us. We are called to respond faithfully to His prompting and to pray for the things (and the people) that He lays on our heart. For guidance on what to pray for, see below.*

## 1. THEME VERSE

We invite you to read the Bible daily and ask God to highlight a verse or phrase for you that could be your theme verse for the year ahead. Additionally, you may come across a verse that you think could be a theme verse for our church.

## 2. FRIENDS & FAMILY

Ask God to highlight a few people to you. Consider why it is that He has brought these people to mind and ask God to give you opportunities to love and serve them. Engage your heart and your mind as you pray for them daily. You may very well be moved to be more intentional with these people and perhaps even invite them out to a Citylights event or gathering! Be open to what God does.

## 3. CITYLIGHTS CHURCH REQUESTS

Below is a growing list of items that we are hoping for in our church. Partner with us in praying in faith for these items!

- Growth as disciples who make disciples.
- Protection & Wisdom for Brett & Natalie.
- Boldness for our church as we grow as a people of invitation.
- Financial provision & faithfulness for 2019.
- A CityLights Kids Director.
- Life Community Multiplication and more LC leaders.
- Unity and humility.
- Salvations and baptisms in 2019.
- Protection and encouragement for our Serving Team Facilitators and LC leaders.
- More Servants: specifically CL Kids teachers, someone to manage the podcast, graphic designers, and someone to organize the weekly bulletin.
- For revival in our hearts, our city, and our nation.



# APPENDIX ARTICLE: SHAPE—Hearing God

## 1. What is S.H.A.P.E?

S.H.A.P.E is an acronym that outlines a helpful pattern for interacting with God. Central to following Jesus is hearing and obeying, this is a journey of learning to abide and stay connected to our heavenly Father each day.

[Scripture](#) >> [Hearing \(& Journaling\)](#) >> [Action](#) >> [Prayer](#) >> [Exaltation](#)

**Scripture:** Start a Bible reading plan (i.e reading a chapter of Matthew each day). Begin your time with God by reading his Word and asking him to speak. As you begin, you can ask him a specific questions such as does he have an encouragement, warning, or instruction? Note if a verse, or phrase grabs your attention and after reading the chapter(s) come back to that verse. You may want to write that verse in your journal.

**Hearing (& Journaling):** *This is a difference maker.* We want interaction with God not just information about God. Focus on the verse that stood out, or the theme, and take time to listen and interact. God desires to speak to us. If nothing stood out then you may read an additional psalm or ask him why nothing stood out. “What do you want me to recognize about your character today? Why did this stand out? How do you want me to grow? Then listen quietly.

*Write down what God says. You can start with “My child whom I love, ...”* Write down what you sense the Lord is speaking to you from the perspective of God speaking. The Bible is God’s divine word. He speaks through his word, by his Spirit. God speaks primarily through the Bible but also specifically to us, often through our thought-stream. When we ask him to speak, often his response can be the first thought that comes into our head. Don’t overcomplicate it. If we reflect on “For God so loved the world” and sense God is speaking to us about his love it could very well be that God wants to speak to us reminding us that he knows us and loves us. Give it a try! God wants to speak to us and we can practice hearing him through the scriptures as he directs us to obey the scriptures.

**Action (or Application):** this causes the rubber to meet the road. Like a car burning rubber it should leave a mark on your life, and the lives around you. It is helpful to write down the specific action step in our journal. At times the action may be small or abstract but other times specific actions will come to mind. Ask God what he wants you to do and dialogue with him writing it out. This is where “Hearing” and “Action” can overlap and that is okay. For example:

*Me: what do you want me to do in light of your love today?*

*G: Relax. You have nothing to prove. You can rest in my love. Rejoice in my love.*

*Me: Anything else? (wait. listen. maybe something or someone comes to mind).*

**Prayer:** Spend time dialoguing with God about whatever is on your heart. Pray for friends, family, our city.



**Exalt:** Give God praise and thank him for his love. Practice thankfulness.

## 2. Sample SHAPE

**Scripture:** Read a few chapters including Psalms 55.

**Hearing:** Ps. 55:22 stood out as I read. I asked God why this verse stood out and what he wanted to say. I listened and then wrote out the thoughts that came to mind. Below is a sample:

*Scripture: "Cast your burden on Yahweh, and he will sustain you. He will never allow the righteous to be moved." – ps 55:22*

*Hearing: G: My child whom I love, you feel weak and overwhelmed but you do not need to sustain yourself. I will sustain you. Give your burden to me (ps 55:22), cast your cares on me (1 peter 5:7). I will carry you. I will hold you firm. I am your fortress.*

*Me: How am I trying to sustain myself right now?*

*G: ....*

*Action: Practice thankfulness amidst stress and give burdens to God. Start each day with thankfulness and praise for the next month...(have further dialogue with God).*

In regards to Prayer & Exaltation, you don't necessarily need to write out your prayers unless you find this helpful.

## 3. Further Comments.

*This isn't just about you. It is also about disciples to come.*

There are many ways to interact with God. We aren't saying that every time of prayer for every person will always follow a specific pattern. This is about having a common framework and foundation for learning how to abide with Jesus which, is about hearing and obeying (action). This is a simple guide to help people learn to pray so that when others come to Jesus, we have a common practice that we can introduce to them. S.H.A.P.E gives us a common language and practice as a church.

*Hearing is not simply observing.*

God can speak to us through our observations and does speak through our thoughts. But we don't want to just ponder scripture in our human wisdom. We want God to speak. If something stands out to us, we can stop and ask "God, why is this standing out to me?" How does he respond? It is helpful to learn to discern God's voice. Finishing our time of prayer with the thought "what I noticed today..." is different than "what God spoke to me today..." **We want to hear from God, not just think about God.**

*Learn how to read the Bible – a comment on Interpretation of Scripture:*

The Context of the Bible Matters. It is not a puzzle to put together however we please. We want to both study Scripture as well as meditate on it – these disciplines will benefit each other. We will be better equipped to discern the accurateness of what God is speaking when we know the truth of who God is and how to interpret Scripture in context. When studying scripture we want to ask, “what did this mean to the original audience?” Secondly, we want to then ask “what does this mean to me?” How it applied to the original audience will help us discern how it applies to us. S.H.A.P.E encourages listening and the personal specific question of what God is wanting to say to me but this needs to be founded on knowing the overarching story of the Bible and the original context. The Bible was written for a specific people in a specific time (i.e first century) as well as for all people of all times. Tip: Buy an ESV Study Bible.

*You could call the “hearing” portion of SHAPE “Jesus-centered meditation.”*

In his book called Prayer, Richard Foster says, “In Meditative Prayer the Bible ceases to be a quotation dictionary and becomes instead “wonderful words of life” that lead us to the Word of Life. It differs even from the study of Scripture. Whereas the study of Scripture enters on exegesis, the meditation upon Scripture enters in internalizing and personalizing the passage. The written Word becomes a living word addressed to us. This is a time not for technical studies or analysts or even the gathering or material to share with others. We are to set aside all tendencies towards arrogance and with humble hearts receive the word addressed to us. Often I find kneeling especially appropriate for this particular time.”



# APPENDIX ARTICLE: Information on Fasting

## What is fasting?

Fasting is abstaining from our everyday bread to put ourselves in a position of need before the Bread of Life. It is to empty ourselves of physical pleasures to seek to be filled with God's presence and power. Biblical fasting is to go without food. To clarify, the common practice of abstaining from various activities or treats such as chocolate, media, sports, or coffee is healthy, but is not a biblical "fast."

## Should we fast?

Fasting is beneficial and there are appropriate times to fast as can be noted in Jesus' teaching in Matthew 9:14-15 (cf. Mark 2:18-20). But fasting is not required. The only time we see fasting as a requirement was for Israel, under the law of Moses, with the annual fast on the Day of Atonement. Fasting is a humble response to God and an opportunity to grow closer to him. It is not a way of earning God's love. We are free to respond to God in this way and then grow and benefit as his people have through the ages. Our motives matter as we approach fasting as an opportunity rather than an obligation.

It can further be noted that Matthew records Jesus' teaching on fasting in the same passage as his teaching on the practices of prayer and giving (Matt. 6). It is helpful to pay attention to all three of these practices and not ignore fasting.

*"Some have exalted religious fasting beyond all Scripture and reason; and others have utterly disregarded it." –John Wesley*

## Types of Biblical Fasting

- Full fast: eating no food. This is the most common.
- Partial fast: only vegetables with no meats or treats (i.e Daniel. Daniel 10:3).
- Absolute fast: no food or liquids – an extreme fast. Esther and Moses are examples.

There are also personal private fasts and corporate fasts.

Examples of private fasting:

- David (Ps. 69:10), Jesus (Lk. 4) and Anna (Lk. 2:37).
- Historical examples: Athanasius, Luther, Calvin, Knox, Wesley, Edwards and more.

Examples of corporate fasting:

- The Israelite exiles prior to traveling (Ezra 8:21) and the people of Judah when under attack (2 Chr. 20:3). The early church also fasted (Acts 13:3, 14:23).
- Historically, Charles Spurgeon's church fasted together seeing results. John Wesley notes how Britain fasted during the French invasion in 1756.



## Purpose of Fasting

- *Breakthrough & Longing.* There are times when we feel the desire to seek God earnestly and we choose to fast. In the Bible, people fasted in emergency's and times of desperation.
- *Repentance & Cleansing.* It can be an expression of repentance as we desire to shed the things that control us as we seek God. Our sin can be revealed as we fast.
- *Dedication & Discipline.* Fasting can be our response to a need for increased spiritual discipline and focus. It reminds us that God is the source of life (Mt. 4:4).
- Fasting can also be a response to our corporate life together or poverty and injustice.

## Health & Fasting

- Fasting can be healthy. Toxins are released as the body is cleansed. Though this process over the first few days can involve headaches, bad breath, etc. for most people it isn't unhealthy.
- One cannot last longer than 3 days without water and hydration is very important.
- Most people will not hit the point where fasting becomes unhealthy until after a few weeks. The body lasts on reserves for that period.
- Feelings of hunger occur because our stomach has been trained to eat at certain periods. This is why the first 3 days are the most difficult.
- Certain people such as those who are pregnant, diabetic, working through eating disorders or issues of personal image should avoid fasting and seek wise counsel.

## Practical Advice for Fasting

- Start small. It can be helpful to start with one day before doing numerous days.
- It is good to be stretched. Though difficult, we can often go longer than we think. There are challenges and benefits that come with multi-day fasts that cannot be experienced if we only fast a meal or two.
- When starting to fast, pray about a length, make a decision, and if necessary, let a friend know for accountability.
- Have a clear purpose. Why are we fasting? What are we responding to?
- If working a labor job, consider your physical needs. It may be wise to have protein shakes or to fast on one's day's off. An extended full fast may not be possible and one may consider doing an extended partial fast to discipline eating and seek God yet also keep physically strong. Be careful to not justify avoiding fasting because of one's job.
- There is never a convenient time. There are always obstacles and the possibilities of awkward dinners. Just do it.
- Eat small amounts to start and end the fast.
- During a personal fast (versus a corporate fast), keep it a secret (Mt. 6:17-18) and ensure it is not a way of getting attention.

*"Fasting is a physical exclamation point at the end of the sentence "I want and need you!" – John Piper*