

WEEK OF PRAYER AND FASTING

22—26 January 2018

Reading and Fasting Guide

BUILD YOUR CHURCH LORD

It's good to start another year in prayer. On Sundays we are saying, 'Lord teach us to pray,' and at our Week of Prayer & Fasting we are praying, **LORD BUILD YOUR CHURCH.**

In his letter to the church in Ephesus, Paul reminds us that the Lord wants us to use our gifts to help with his church building project:

It was he who gave some to be apostles, some to be prophets, some to be evangelists, and some to be pastors and teachers, to prepare God's people for works of service, so that the body of Christ may be built up until we all reach unity in the faith and in the knowledge of the Son of God and become mature, attaining to the whole measure of the fulness of Christ. Ephesians 4: 11-13

Each evening we will focus on one of the five church building gifts in this passage to guide our prayers. We are committed to raising up and releasing leaders in all of these areas and encourage everyone to join with us as we invite the Holy Spirit to fill us with His presence & equip us with His gifts on behalf of the Body of Christ, the church.

Reading Guide

Monday: APOSTLE

Reading: Acts 13; Romans 1: 1-7

What do we learn from the church in Antioch, and the calling of Paul, about pioneering/apostolic mission. If you had to write an apostolic job description which could be used in New Life what would it look like?

What is the Holy Spirit saying to our church about this and how do we work with the Spirit to create an apostolic (sending) environment at New Life?

Tuesday: PROPHET

Reading: 1 Corinthians 14: 1-5 How to use prophecy to encourage

John 4: 1-42 How to use prophecy for evangelism

1 Thessalonians 5: 16-24 How to test and respond to prophecy

Revelation 3: 14-22 A recent word given to our church through the prayer ministry team.

In 1 Corinthians 14 Paul teaches us to eagerly desire the gift of prophecy in order that we encourage strengthen and comfort people. Think of someone you are going to meet today and ask the Holy Spirit to give you a word of encouragement for them.

Wednesday: EVANGELIST

Reading Acts 8:26 – 9:19

Philip & Ananias were both given very specific evangelistic assignments. In one sense using these examples for ourselves to follow all seems very miraculous & daunting. On the other hand there is a simplicity to their obedience which we can all learn from: They simply followed the lead of the Holy Spirit sharing the gospel as instructed.

The encounter with the Ethiopian Eunuch reminds me of Barry Kissell's approach to witnessing... When he is chatting to someone he turns an everyday conversation into a faith conversation by simply saying, 'did you know it says in the bible...?'

Ananias's courageous faith literally led to the salvation of millions and reminds us that only God sees the heart of a man or a woman and however unlikely the gospel candidate, our job is to follow God's direction

and trust Him for the outcome.

Ask the Holy Spirit to lead you to someone you can share the good news about Jesus with today.

Thursday: PASTOR

Reading: Philippians 1: 1-11

Paul's pastoral heart simply oozes compassion in this beautiful passage. Spend some time meditating on one or more of Pauls' heartfelt phrases: *'Your partnership in the gospel; I long for you with the affection of Christ Jesus; Your love may abound more and more; Pure and blameless until the day of Christ...'*

Pray for Kerry Morgan, our Life Support Co-ordinator. If you haven't completed a Life Support Questionnaire take some time to fill one in so that you can play your part in supporting your brothers and sisters at New Life.

Pray also for our partnership with the other churches in Northallerton as we reach out to people in the new housing, make the Syrian refugees feel at home in our town, and as we work together with other organisations in the Living Room project to bless our community.

Friday: TEACHER

Reading: 1 Timothy 4

Imagine having the Apostle Paul as your mentor. Talk about full on! I sometimes wonder if Timothy had any say in the matter. It's all good advice however. Our world and the church is crying out for Christians who will *'devote themselves to the public reading of scripture, to preaching and to teaching.'*

Pray for someone you know who is called to communicate God's Word in whatever setting. Pray that the Holy Spirit will enable him / her to be *an example in life, in love, in faith, and in purity.*

If you are called to teach, take on Paul's challenge to *watch your life and doctrine closely.* Is there anything that the Holy Spirit wants to bring to your attention which is wrong & needs your repentance.

Psalm 139: 23-24 ***Search me O God, and know my heart; test me and know my anxious thoughts. See if there is any offensive way in me, and lead me in the way everlasting.***

Fasting Guide

WHAT IS FASTING?

Fasting is a spiritual discipline taught in the Bible, which helps our spiritual growth. Jesus expected His followers to fast and in the early church in Acts, the Disciples often fasted before making any important decisions.

Fasting is voluntarily to reduce or eliminate food intake for a specific time and purpose, humbling ourselves before God and feasting on Him instead. It is not about twisting God's arm, or a formula for getting through to Him, or punishing our bodies, rather it's about taking our eyes off the things of this world and focusing on God instead, demonstrating that we are serious about our relationship with Him.

Although fasting in Scripture is mostly fasting from food, there are other ways to fast. Anything you can temporarily give up in order to focus better on God can be considered a fast.

PRACTICAL CONSIDERATIONS WHEN FASTING FOOD

- **If you have any medical conditions or are on any medication that you think could be affected by fasting, you should consult your GP.**
- Set aside ample time to be alone with the Lord and His Word. Why not use the time with God that you would have spent preparing food and eating it?
- It is important to drink plenty of fluid. Fasting is going without food, not without drink.
- Be careful about how much strenuous activity or driving you undertake when going without food.

WHAT WILL YOU FAST?

Take some time to consider prayerfully what you might fast during this week, and let's enjoy feasting on Him!