

immeasurably
MORE

DEVOTION + PRAYER JOURNAL

FIRST BAPTIST CHURCH

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WELCOME

We are entering a truly momentous period in the life of First Baptist Church. After many years of prayer, planning, and hoping, we are taking a giant step toward growing our ministry and presence in the community. As our forefathers have done so many times in the past, we are ready to hear from God as He shares with us a new vision—a vision that will transform us into a winning, Kingdom Church that reaches every person God wants us to reach with the saving Gospel of Christ.

The desire to build a new building on Eagle Mountain arises from over 20 years of documenting shortcomings in our current facility, of assessing options, and the conclusion reached that a new campus on a new property should be pursued. The new church building will provide much-needed functionality to ensure our success as we engage our community during the century ahead. The need for a new building is heightened by a sincere desire to transform the body at First Baptist Church from a traditional Southern Baptist Church into a disciple-making, community engaging, and church planting Southern Baptist Church. In effect, First Baptist Church will replant itself at the new facility. How exciting!

Our hope is that in the next eight weeks, you will take the next step in knowing, loving, hearing, and following our great God. I encourage you to dig deep in yourself and your Bible, to rely on one another and challenge each other with questions, and finally, to just listen. God is speaking. Are you ready for God to do immeasurably more in us and through us?

May we hear God,
Pastor Stacy Reed

WONDER

MISSION

Bring Them In, Build Them Up, and Send Them Out. Our mission aligns with Matthew 28:19-20:

“19 Therefore go and make disciples of all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit, 20 and teaching them to obey everything I have commanded you. And surely I am with you always, to the very end of the age.”

We accomplish the mission as Jesus did, through a relational discipleship model. We focus on engaging the community through ministry and campus facilities, and by worshiping The LORD God Almighty in spirit and in truth.

HISTORY

First Baptist Church, Batesville, formed in October 1847 as Baptist Church No. 1. In its 170-year history, the body of believers in the church has been visionary—overseeing the building of several church facilities and prayerfully planting several churches. The current church building, constructed in 1924, has been instrumental in facilitating the church’s ministries. In recent decades, however, the church’s facilities have become less and less functional even as church members have done all they can to increase land holdings around the church and have purchased and built additional church facilities.

In 1993, the church commissioned the West Annex--the latest facility to be added to the current campus. That same year, the church hired an architectural firm to assess options from improving the Worship Center and Worship Center traffic flow. None of the options proved feasible so the church pursued an option for building a new campus.

WONDER

Subsequently, the church purchased a 15-acre plot of land on Eagle Mountain. In 2017, the church commissioned Building God's Way to produce an initial design for a new church facility at the Eagle Mountain property.

VISION

Our vision for the next 10 years includes shifting to a more effective relational model of discipleship, engaging the community more effectively through new partnership ministries, and planting churches in our region to increase capacity to reach the lost with the gospel of Christ. Through this vision, we believe we can:

EQUIP DISCIPLES THROUGH RELATIONSHIPS

- We know this is God's call on our lives.
- We want to foster this in small groups and individual relationships.
- We need an accessible facility that also offers room to grow.

ENGAGE THE COMMUNITY THROUGH OUR CAMPUS AND MINISTRIES

- We want our community to use our campus.
- We want our community to know we are here to serve.
- We want to be a partner in growing Independence County.
- We want our church to have spaces that are relevant to the needs of the community.

PLANT CHURCHES TO EXPAND THE KINGDOM IN OUR REGION

- We are not called to be a mega church but to grow churches.
- We believe that God will be faithful to send us more workers.
- We need a facility that supports church-planting cohorts.

WONDER



WISDOM

immeasurably **MORE**

We know that the vision of building a new church campus, of becoming a discipling church, of engaging our community with the gospel, and of planting new churches to expand God's kingdom presents God-sized problems that we cannot overcome on our own. We take comfort that the early church had similar struggles as it was presented with the daunting task of reaching the nations. Paul gave this prayer to the church in Ephesus, a prayer that we pray today!

For this reason, we kneel before you Father, from whom every family in heaven and on earth derives its name. We pray that out of Your glorious riches You may strengthen us with power through Your Spirit in our inner being, so that Christ may dwell in our hearts through faith. And we pray that we, being rooted and established in love, may have power, together with all the Lord's holy people, to grasp how wide and long and high and deep is the love of Christ, and to know this love that surpasses knowledge--that we may be filled to the measure of all the fullness of You God. Now to You, Who is able to do **IMMEASURABLY MORE** than all we ask or imagine, according to Your power that is at work within us, to You be glory in the church and in Christ Jesus throughout all generations, for ever and ever! Amen.

WISDOM

IMPORTANT STEPS

Commit

It is our hope that each person involved in our church will take the time to seek the leading of God about how they should be involved in the future of our ministry, starting right now. We are appealing to each of you for a commitment to pray and fast.

By skipping one meal each week and setting time aside for God, for six consecutive weeks, you will have the opportunity to go before the Lord, ask simple questions, and gain direction about His desire for us.

Pray

We believe each of us needs to hear from God.

The idea of sacrificing food in times of need has been a long-standing practice of Christians throughout the centuries. Our physical hunger reflects our spiritual hunger for God and helps us remember how much we rely on Him for everything. Let us join the saints who have gone before us in a practice of prayer and fasting, knowing that yet again God will be faithful.

Ask Questions

Most of our prayers tend to be declarative statements. We ask God to bless our friends and family and to meet our needs. Generally speaking, we don't often ask questions of God and await His response.

WISDOM

We are hoping that this can be a chance to practice a different kind of prayer, namely, that we can all ask questions each week and simply listen for what God has to say.

Respond

Learning to “hear” from God is a discipline enhanced by practice. In confidence, ask. In faith, listen. You may experience a level of intimacy with your Heavenly Father that you have never known before.

It may seem strange at first, but don’t give up. It takes time to figure out what response is best for you - perhaps journaling, contemplation, drawing, singing, or spending time in God’s creation. Follow God’s direction.

Encourage

With each person participating in this practice of prayer, fasting, and devotionals together, we have the great opportunity to encourage each other. Motivate each other to participate in this adventure that may change your life, the life of the church, and perhaps even the surrounding community. Share your experiences, encourage others to join you, and support them along the way. Don’t forget to ask for help and accountability when you need it too!

WHAT IS FASTING?

Throughout history when godly men and women were desperate for God’s intervention, they forsook food (fasted) and laid their needs before God. During this dedicated time of prayer, God often made His heart clear to those who asked, like in Acts 13:2-3.

WISDOM

National fasts were proclaimed in times of great trouble (2 Chronicles 20:3), individuals facing personal crisis paused from routine to fast and plead their case before the God of heaven (2 Samuel 12:16), and others needing clarity as to the mind of God sought Him through fasting (Daniel 9:3). It was during the routine of fasting that God revealed His desire that Paul and Barnabas be set apart for ministry to the early church (Acts 13:2), and it was after a fast that these same men were released to take the gospel to “the uttermost parts of the earth” (Acts 13:3, 1:8). It seems like Jesus assumed fasting would be somewhat common among those committed to Him saying in the watershed Sermon on the Mount, “When you fast...” (Matthew 6:16).

What was a practice among Christians throughout the centuries has been lost to our generation. The idea of forsaking food for any length of time has lost its appeal in our fast paced world where information on just about anything is readily available from a variety of “other” sources than the God of heaven.

We are about to take a short journey together as a church, an exciting journey wherein we collectively shall seek the mind of God, asking how He wills us to be involved in the future of our church. We benefit from the faith and work of those who have preceded us, and it is now our time to be the faithful so that another generation can be granted the opportunity to embrace the story of the Good News.

Perhaps you have done some form of a fast before - maybe a Daniel Fast, or a fast from Facebook. The idea of fasting is new to many of us too. Don't hesitate to reach out and ask others if you have any questions or would like guidance in the midst of this spiritual practice.

WISDOM

We hope that what we practice in this campaign will grow into life-long spiritual habits, and we pray God will use this journey to bring a new and deeper unity of purpose to your calling and the calling of our ministry in our community.

The adventure is worthwhile. Aren't you curious what it will be like?

WHERE DO WE START?

Select a Time

Most people who begin a practice of fasting discover the importance of scheduling it into their day ahead of time.

You are being asked to skip one meal each week. If a meal is impossible, determine a time (try for one hour) during which you can devote your total attention to focusing on God. Write it on your calendar.

Setting aside this time can be very difficult, and sitting with God for an hour can be very challenging too...especially when we are used to spending just a few minutes with Him at meals or before bed.

Try to set aside an hour and see how it goes. Each week, try to add 10 minutes to the time you set aside the previous week.

WISDOM

Create an Agenda

Below are five steps for consideration as you set the agenda for your time with God:

- **Release** - Take a few minutes at the beginning of your time with the Lord to "let go" of all those things you feel might prevent you from hearing from Him.
- **Receive** - Read the portions of God's Word that have been selected for you. Read, then re-read. Try different translations. Ask yourself if you could tell the story to someone else.
- **Reflect** - Ask God questions and wait in silence to hear from Him. Write down in this journal insights you receive - whether they are a single word, phrases, or free flowing thoughts. Feel free to think about the stories of Scripture or the suggested prayer and questions, contemplating them in your heart, out loud, or on paper.
- **Remember** - Spend a few minutes recalling all that God has done for you. Perhaps you'll think of a time in recent weeks. Or perhaps it has been awhile since you've thought of the bigger picture of God sending His only Son to live, die, and rise again for you. Take a few moments to try and let that sink in.
- **Respond** - Choose to end your fast however you like - try singing a song, reciting a prayer, or writing a poem. Enjoy God's presence.

Pick A Place

Find a place where you can go without distractions. Take time to prepare this place, so that you may concentrate on your time with God, and don't forget your Bible. If possible, turn your phone off or on silent. Shut out the world!

WISDOM

Enjoy

Relish this time. Whether it is a big challenge to fast and set aside this time, or it comes to you naturally, it is worth relishing. It is teaching us each something about ourselves, others, and God.

Know that you are not alone, but that God has promised us a helper. In acting as a comforter, or possibly a discomforter, the Holy Spirit will guide us in learning more about God's will.

Journal

There is a space provided to write down the details of your encounter with God. Take time to jot down impressions, insights, or questions gained from your time together. Reflect on your words and review them regularly. Feel free to use this space to write out a prayer to God.

The Questions

The following pages contain your weekly study guide for your commitment to pray and fast. Each journal entry includes a selected passage or two from God's Word along with a short devotional to guide your thinking as you speak with and hear from God. Consider what is written, but also open yourself up to God's direction. Perhaps He'll lead you to continue reading on in Scripture or provide you with the words to pray.

WANDER

Week 1

RESPONDING TO BAD NEWS

It was in the royal palace of the ancient kingdom of Persia, a place of unimaginable affluence, where the king's cupbearer heard some very bad news. One of his brothers had just returned from Jerusalem, the capital city of what was once the mighty and magnificent kingdom of David and Solomon.

The glory days of Judah had long passed. A nation born of God had turned from Him. What God had raised up, He destroyed. Ravaging nations turned the fruited hills of Judah and the glory of its capital to rubble. These messengers now reported that those who had survived the ravages of war and the total destruction that accompanied it were living miserable lives and were held in reproach by all of their neighbors. The faces of tragedy are not far away. Pick up the morning newspaper and you'll read of it, turn on the television and you'll see it, and look deeply into the eyes of others walking down the streets of your town and you might even begin to experience it. Books will tell the personal stories of those who have endured the horror of pain, and film has captured many of its images. We have seen the victims of the holocaust, national genocide, and natural disasters like tsunamis, hurricanes, and tornadoes.

Nehemiah was ravaged by the dismal report he received. Incapacitated, he sobbed as his mind came to grip with what had been lost. He allowed himself to experience the pain of others and bitterly mourned. And in the midst of it all, he prayed and fasted—opening his heart to hearing what God wanted to say to him.

WANDER

Week 2

PREPARING TO MEET GOD

As a cupbearer to the king, Nehemiah had access to the most powerful man in the world. It was a privilege offered by position and one not to be taken lightly.

Imagine a position of unfettered access to the president of the country. There is a personal matter you want to bring to his attention, a breach of protocol given the position you hold. Much could be lost; a negative response could mean your job and possibly the end of your career. Nehemiah undoubtedly weighed the risk and opportunity and decided that what could be gained would be far greater than the potential of personal loss. In order to undertake the task he proposed, he needed both authority and help. He sought God's guidance as he prepared for his visit and came to the king with a well conceived plan requesting his support in assisting the remnant in Judah.

The sacrifice of Jesus Christ provides to all those who trust in Him for salvation, unfettered access into the very presence of God. No mediator is necessary; all are invited into the throne room of heaven (Hebrews 4:14-16).

There is something to be said about preparing for our meeting with the Creator of the universe. What do we need in order to do His will in our lives? What questions do we have as we fulfill His commands? Taking time to think and to prepare enhances our time with God, increases our anticipation, and maximizes the fulfillment we find in our reciprocal relationship with our Heavenly Father.

WANDER

Week 3

MOTIVATING OTHERS

Remember the high school pep rally? It was always before the “big” game and was often associated with a huge bonfire, cheerleaders, and motivating talk. We worked ourselves into something of an emotional frenzy and we went out to do battle with the enemy.

It’s pretty hard to sustain the emotion of a pep rally. Emotion can be overcome by watching the opposition take the field (they may seem so much bigger and more athletic than we are), the devotion of their fans (they even brought special loyalty towels to wave in front of us), the comparison of statistics (realistically this is a David and Goliath match), or the impact of a great opening play (the first play of the game is a 104 yard kick-off return). It’s hard to come back after your breath has been knocked out of you.

David conquered Goliath. His journey to the valley to meet the pride of the Philistines wasn’t preceded by a pep rally of soldiers shouting and screaming. Instead, he had been prepared for this battle in pastures far from the adulation of others, alone with sheep and foraging beasts of the field from whom he had to defend both himself and his flock. Indeed, these challenges prepared him for what was to be the greatest challenge he had yet faced.

When King Saul questioned his youthful zeal, David was quick to respond, saying, “your servant was tending his father’s sheep. When a lion or a bear came and took a lamb from the flock, I went out after him and attacked him, and rescued it from his mouth;

WANDER

Week 4

PREPARING FOR THE BATTLE

A little plaque on a wall once showed two people in a boat who were far away from shore and the look on their faces reflect a level of concern and consternation. Underneath the image are the words, "Pray to God but row toward shore."

The thought of trouble can cause dismay; the prospect of it is real and unavoidable. And while Nehemiah clearly anticipated that the work he is called to would include hardship, the impact of its reality created concern and required a response.

The enemies of God are clever and relentless. Affliction rarely comes when expected; it comes at inconvenient times and often hits us where we are most vulnerable. The rumors of attack had undoubtedly circulated throughout Jerusalem, but there was one day when the reality of everything truly began to set in. It came at a time when the immensity of the task seemed impossible and all those involved were experiencing stress and great weariness. It's then that we must assess our resources. Nehemiah first prayed and then issued a reminder to remember the great and glorious God who would fight for us (Nehemiah 4:14, 19). Then he gathered all the people and announced the plan: half will work, half will stand guard; everyone will be armed; a trumpet will sound when trouble is clearly apparent; we will defend one another; and we'll remain diligent!

The battle cry was sounded: "Fight for your brothers, your sons, your daughters, your wives, and your land!" (Nehemiah 4:14).

WANDER

The Apostle Paul urged those of another generation to do the same. Our battle is no less formidable, and to overcome and be victorious the marching orders are the same: put on the whole armor of God, be persistent in prayer for yourselves and “believers everywhere,” stay alert, and stand your ground.

Film has captured the intensity of war. Scenes have been recreated to show the fierceness of the fight; the noise, the pain, the smoke and the suffering. But the impact of valor occurs at the end. When the smoke clears and the fight is over, you can begin to see the images of the victor. He may be dirty, bloodied from the fight, and alone, but boldly he stands. Will you be standing at the end of the day?

PRAYER: Heavenly Father, continually prepare me to withstand the attacks of others and the challenges I’ll face. Help me boldly stand for You.

QUESTION: Will You show me where I am most vulnerable?

WANDER

Week 5

TOO BUSY IN THE WORK OF THE LORD

As long as the city of Jerusalem was defenseless, there was little concern that the population would assert itself. Enemies lived at ease, confident that the compliant attitude of Jerusalem's residents would not disrupt the balance of power.

Nehemiah's coming was perceived from the beginning as a threat to the security of the area. If the inhabitants of Jerusalem were successful in reconstructing the city walls, the defiant character of its population might threaten the status quo. It was no surprise then that there would be those who would go to extremes to stop the project. What began with idle threats accelerated to all out scheming. If the project leader could be eliminated then those who remained might cave in under pressure.

Nehemiah led by example. When opposition found its way to Nehemiah, he was actively engaged in the construction project. On four separate occasions opponents sought to persuade him to leave the job site and four times he responded, "I am doing a great work! I cannot stop to come and meet with you."

There are those today that would encourage us to give up on fulfilling God's calling on our lives. They would tempt us with alternatives, scorn us for our devotion, ascribe to us wrong motives, ridicule the significance of our work, and threaten our security. God granted Nehemiah discernment to see beyond the threat to the motivation behind it, boldness to speak truth, and confidence to leave the consequences with Him.

WANDER

Week 6

RESPONDING TO GOD

It has been suggested that accomplishment is at the heart of psychological health. It has been proven that those who set lofty goals and accomplish them, feel a good deal different about themselves than their counterparts who drift along in the streams of life.

Some might have expected that Nehemiah's evening tour of the ruins of Jerusalem (Nehemiah 2:11-15) would have resulted in plans to return to the luxurious comforts of the Medo-Persian empire in Suza. The city was so ravaged, that a mule even had a tough time navigating the war-torn obstacles. But instead of seeing all the reasons to walk away, Nehemiah saw possibilities, hope, and an opportunity for a nation to be revived. The task was considered by most to be impossible. The workforce had lost interest in life and come to accept their suffering as their lot in life. Nehemiah shares his vision from God and the message somehow cuts through the gristle of indifference and fans the flame of hope in their souls. And despite unrelenting opposition from every side, they tackle the impossible and succeed!

The evidence of their success was reflected in far more than a city revived; it could be seen in the eyes of the workers, the way they walked, the way they talked, and the way they looked at life. Those who had earlier seen themselves as complete failures, had experienced what God can do through those willing to commit to Him. They had seen diversity turned into unity, trash transformed to treasure. Those once too poor to give, gave out of the generosity of their heart; those who had held on tightly to the little they had, sowed generously and reaped abundance.

WORSHIP

CELEBRATE

Let us celebrate this journey together,
considering what we have heard from God.

Join us for a special Sunday gathering

...where we will have the opportunity to bring our gifts to
God, showing our 12 month commitment to our ministry's
sustainable building project.

SUNDAY, JUNE 3

10:45 AM

MEET AT

First Baptist Church
610 East Main St.
Batesville, AR 72501