



"SERVING GOD BY SERVING MANKIND"

2024

**Fasting & Prayer
Devotional**



Our Prayer for You Getting Started

Our prayer for you during the next 21 days is that you will experience a deeper craving for the beauty of the Lord and for the wonder of his leading in your life, and that you will know the fullness of the Holy Spirit and the favor of the God of heaven.

Our prayer is that you will realize you are not alone on this journey. You are joining with your immediate and extended church family in seeking God for significant breakthroughs. These will ripple out and turn into a tidal wave of revival and spiritual awakening across our country.

Our prayer is that you will acquire your own prayer-and-fasting testimony. And that God will overwhelm you with his goodness as you seek his power, presence and provision in every step of your journey.

Getting Started

Pray

Any encounter with God has to begin with a conversation with Him. Pray. Ask him what he would have you give up and for how long. He may speak to you in signs but it will most likely be a sense or a strong feeling pointing you to a particular type of fast. Ask the Lord how long you should fast. While as a body, the church is fasting for 21 days, the Lord may ask you to fast for fewer days or he may ask you to fast for more.

Pick

Biblical fasting always involves food. Here are some examples:

Partial Fast: Not eating one or two meals on a specific day or abstaining from certain kinds of food.

All-day Food Fast: Abstaining from food one day or multiple days per week.

Daniel Fast: Eat only vegetables, fruit, water and juice (minimal amount of carbohydrates).

For certain people (jobs, medical conditions, etc.) fasting food is not possible. Deliberately abstaining from an activity or media, items which

consume our time, and replacing them with focused times of prayer, worship and the Word of God are also beneficial.

Set goals & write them down

Begin with clear personal goals as well as breakthrough goals for your church. Be specific. Why are you fasting? Do you need direction, healing, restoration of your marriage or resolution of family issues? Are you facing difficulties? Pray and ask the Holy Spirit for guidance. Write these requests in a journal or a notebook, or create a digital journal using your favorite note taking program or app. Keeping a journal throughout your fast is a great way to track and remember all God does during your fast.

Feast on the word of God

Fasting is ultimately an expression of humility and dependence on God. It is about replacing the daily intake of food, entertainment and human contact with focused times of prayer, spending large amounts of time feeding on the Word of God and spiritual listening. You can use the recommended readings in the devotional coming next week or continue your normal Bible reading program. The YouVersion Bible App and bible.com have a variety of 21-day Bible reading programs.

Open your life before God

One of the great benefits of spiritual fasting is a heightened awareness of God's presence and power in our lives. It is not that God has moved but that we have. Fasting has a great way of moving us towards a deeper spiritual dependency and away from willful self-dependency. The greatest breakthrough will take place when you make time to examine your life and discover what areas most need breakthrough. We ask that you fast for spiritual breakthroughs for your church family and its mission endeavors as well as for yourself.

Expect God to move

Enter your fast by faith. The Word of God says, "And without faith it is impossible to please God, for anyone who comes to him must believe that he exists and that he rewards those who earnestly seek him" (Hebrews

11:6). Spiritual fasting is a supernatural endeavor that has shaped and transformed God's people for centuries. If you have doubt, ask God to meet you in your doubts and lead you in overcoming them, just as the apostles prayed, "Increase our faith!" (Luke 17:5).

SOAP Method

A great, simple way to journal your devotions is to use the SOAP method.*

SOAP stands for:

Scripture

Read the daily passage and then identify a scripture from the passage that stands out to you.

Observation

Focusing on that scripture ask the Holy Spirit to show you what God is saying.

Application

How does this apply to your life right now?

Prayer

Thank God for revealing His truths to you. Remember, prayer is a two-way conversation, so listen for what God wants to say to you.

**Divine Mentor, Author Wayne Cordeiro*

Our prayer for you over the next 21 days is that your passion for God and His Word will be ignited, and that you will develop a hunger for His presence that is greater than ever before!

As you read these devotionals, keep in mind the following three things: read daily, read prayerfully and read with expectation. We encourage you to read the passages and prepare your own SOAP. God is prepared to reveal Himself to you, so get ready to be Awakened!

Day 1 - Saturday, January 6

Assumed practice

Fasting is not an option but an assumed practice for the serious-minded follower of Jesus. Fasting is a spiritual discipline that believers throughout history incorporated into their daily lives. Jesus did not say, “If you fast,” but, “When you fast.”

Scripture reading

Matthew 6

Key passages

Matthew 6:16-18 — “When you fast, do not look somber as the hypocrites do, for they disfigure their faces to show men they are fasting. Truly I tell you, they have received their reward in full. But when you fast, put oil on your head and wash your face, so that it will not be obvious to others that you are fasting, but only to your Father, who is unseen; and your Father, who sees what is done in secret, will reward you.”

Fasting thought

“Jesus takes it for granted that his disciples will observe the pious custom of fasting. Strict exercise of self-control is an essential feature of the Christian’s life. Such customs have only one purpose — to make the disciples more ready and cheerful to accomplish those things which God would have done.” Dietrich Bonhoeffer

Prayer

Father in heaven, as I subdue the impulses of the flesh this day, I do so not to achieve anything, not to use fasting as a bargaining chip or as a manipulative ploy to get your attention. But I fast as an act of worship, to make myself ready and resolute to do your will with a cheerful heart. In Jesus’ name I pray. Amen.

Day 2 - Sunday, January 7

Read Mark 4

Jesus gave us insight into understanding how His Kingdom would work in our lives. Like a farmer sowing seed, amazing things happen when the seed falls on good, healthy, fertile ground.

Our hearts are like the garden. The things we plant into our lives will grow, and weeds can sprout up if we are not paying attention. If we are going to experience all the amazing things Jesus has provided, we must be intentional about planting the “right” things in our hearts and getting rid of the “weeds.” Plant His Word, cultivate it, and it will produce an incredible harvest. As you fast, expect God to reveal Himself to you more clearly.

“Lord Jesus, thank You for helping me see the amazing truth of sowing Your Word into my life. The harvest that is produced is transforming my life. Help me to see You for who You really are. Help me to see myself in light of who I have become because of Your gift of righteousness. Amen.”

Day 3 - Monday, January 8

Read 1 Samuel 11

The Israelites were under attack. Was there anyone that could save them? Note some interesting symbolism here: Nahash means “serpent.” Jabesh means “dried up.” The “eye” is symbolic of vision and whenever “right” is mentioned, as in the “right hand of God,” it symbolizes authority. Clearly, the attack was a spiritual one.

When our relationship with Jesus feels “dried up”, our enemy attacks. Have you ever considered compromise as an option? Compromise comes from a lack of vision and authority over the enemy. Today, ask the Holy Spirit to reveal any compromise in your life and where you need to be recommitted to Christ. Respond in obedience and Jesus will restore both your authority and your vision so you will experience victory!

“Lord, my desire is to follow You with all of my heart, soul, mind, and strength. Please help me today to see any of the areas of my life in which I have intentionally or unintentionally allowed compromise to creep in. Today, I recommit my life completely to You. Awaken my soul and fill me with Your presence. Amen.”

FASTING TIP

On the third day of your fast, you may experience a headache, flu-like achiness, intense sugar or carb cravings, slight nausea, or fatigue. This is a normal response to detoxification, so make sure you allow yourself some time to rest and keep your fluid intake high. The fourth day is usually much better physically, so hang in there!

Day 4 - Tuesday, January 9

Read 1 Samuel 12

The prophet Samuel gives his farewell address after anointing Israel’s first king, Saul. God graciously permitted His people to have an earthly king and promised to bless them as long as they and their king remained obedient to Him first. However, the Israelites’ failure to comply with God’s standards resulted in them missing out on the promises that their ancestors received.

God wants to rule and reign in our hearts. We often struggle with walking by faith and not by sight, so we seek something tangible. God, in His perfect permissive will and grace, will grant our requests under a stipulation – that we are completely obedient to His Word. The promises of God always carry the asterisk of obedience.

“Heavenly Father, I pray that You give me the strength to be obedient to Your Word. During this season of fasting and prayer, help me to hear Your voice more clearly so that I can operate within Your will. Amen.”

Day 5 - Wednesday, January 10

Read Mark 5

The demon-possessed man was struggling with something that not only kept him up all night, but it was also something he had dealt with for a very long time. He was in constant agony and wanted relief so badly. He would cut himself out of frustration, irritation and desperation, wondering why he was dealing with this issue.

Do you ever find yourself so frustrated that you hurt not only yourself but others? Ever struggle about why you're in a particular situation? Notice that in this passage, the man saw Jesus, ran to Him, laid it down at His feet and was changed forever. After his encounter with the Messiah, he was purposely sent back to his home town so people could see the change that Jesus made in him.

“Heavenly Father, I pray that today I would have the kind of resolve it takes to lay my burdens at Your feet. I am faced with so much and I know that You care about every last detail of my life. Create a testimony through my experiences that will reach others some day and bring You the glory You deserve. Amen.”

Day 6 - Thursday, January 11

Read 1 Samuel 13

It was no doubt that Saul was under a lot of pressure to lead the people into battle. Though he had been given specific instructions on how to proceed, he felt compelled to offer the burnt offering himself. Instead of worshipping in the Lord's way, Saul chose to do it how he saw fit. This was a huge mistake that cost Saul the anointing as king.

No matter what your instincts might be telling you, it is NEVER the prompting of the Holy Spirit to go outside of God's will to get things done. As a leader, this will remove you from God's covering, in addition to everyone you have been charged to lead.

"Father, I thank You for the Holy Spirit that guides and prompts me in Your ways. Thank You that You never leave me or forsake me. Help me to always choose Your ways over my own, for Your ways are higher than mine. In Jesus name, Amen."

Day 7 - Friday, January 12

Read 1 Samuel 14

Jonathan and his armor bearer made room for God to act on their behalf. They had the perspective that God was bigger than them and able to do more than they could. They also understood that God did not have the same limitations or hindrances that they were subject to.

In this season, we should make room for God in our lives through every means available: praying, fasting, giving, devotions. When we make room for God to operate in our lives, He can do much more to fix our situations than we can. When we submit areas of our lives to God, He can remove the hindrances and push past our personal limitations.

“Lord, I ask You to show me areas of personal limitation in my life. I know that You want to bring a breakthrough in this area and I pray You would show me how to make room for You to move. Show me, teach me, guide me and change me, Father. You are bigger than I am and can do way more than I can! Amen.”

Week Two of Your Fast

Entering week two of your fast can present a different level of challenge. Although you probably experienced a decrease in cravings after day three, you may now be experiencing a resurgence of those same cravings.

Right around this time, a metabolic shift takes place in your body. If you are consuming significantly less calories than you were before, your body naturally shifts to its own resources to find sufficient fuel. These hunger pangs you are feeling right now are basically your body asking, “Hey, what’s up? Are you going to give me some more calories, or should I move on to the next available source?” That next source means reserves stored mostly in your fat cells and somewhat in your muscles.

During the second week it is so important to remind yourself why you are doing this. This is when we truly realize how weak we really are, how much we need God’s strength and grace, and not only physically to keep us from eating. We need His grace to be more compassionate, slow to anger, less judgmental, more pliable, more forgiving, and more generous.

Over the next couple of days, if you stick to your fast, here’s what will happen to your body:

1. Your metabolism will slow down. In other words, it will shift to a mode of operation where it requires less energy—or calories to function.
2. A cycle of internal consumption will begin to use your energy stores in the form of fat—and some muscle. To minimize muscle breakdown, drink two glasses of whey protein a day.
3. Because toxins that we consume and don’t eliminate are stored mostly in fat, you will also hit a new level of detox as your body starts using up your fat reserves.

Hang in there! *The best is yet to come!*

Day 8 - Saturday, January 13

Read Mark 6

Notice in this account that Jesus never takes His eyes off of His disciples. Though He may not have been with them in the boat in that moment, it did not mean that He wasn't aware of everything that was going on.

Just because we may find ourselves in a storm from time to time, it doesn't mean that Jesus does not know exactly where you are. Though it may feel like you are on your own in the boat, rest assured in knowing that the Savior has His eyes fixed on you.

"Dear God, help me trust in You to a greater degree, even amidst the scariest storms of life. I know You have Your eyes on me and that You know where I am the entire time. Thank You for that assurance. In Jesus name, Amen."

FASTING TIPS

On day eight you might experience:

- fatigue—let yourself have extra rest if you need it
- achiness and a headache
- irritability
- fogginess

All of these symptoms are normal and will pass. Make sure you keep your water intake up. If you're eating fruits and vegetables that contain a lot of water, you may not have a desire to drink much water. However, keeping your water intake up will help you flush out the second round of toxins that your body is releasing and help relieve the symptoms more quickly.

Finally, more than ever this is the time you have to be vigilant about your spiritual focus. Great days are ahead, and you will be so glad you pushed through this day and didn't give up!

Day 9 - Sunday, January 14

Read 1 Samuel 15

After being instructed by God to destroy the Amalekite nation completely, Saul decides his own way is better. He ends up sparing the life of the Amalekite king and keeping the livestock that appealed to him. His disobedience caused God great sorrow.

Putting God first is really all about having the highest value for Him and what He says. Too often, we make our own adjustments to what God has said, thinking that we know best. Valuing God’s Word and trusting His ways means that when He speaks, we obey completely. Ask God to empower you follow His truth, make the decision that His way is your way, and then just do it.

“Father, open my eyes to see that Your ways lead only to life. I will trust You with all of my heart. Thank You that Your grace empowers me to walk in Your ways. Thank You that I have not been left to my own ability, but am empowered to live in a way I could never live on my own. Amen.”

Day 10 - Monday, January 15

Read 1 Samuel 16

It’s time for a new king, Saul is out of control. The Lord sends Samuel to Bethlehem to find and anoint the next king. The shepherd boy who God has chosen is quite a surprise not only to his family but to the experienced prophet as well!

God has given us gifts and talents that He’ll use for Kingdom purposes. We must not let our shortcomings determine if we are ready or not. Let us only ensure our heart is fully committed to saying “yes” to God. We must be careful to not judge anyone based solely on outer appearances.

“Heavenly Father, I pray that today You will use me to speak encouragement to others and work to uplift someone. Please show me someone with the heart to do what You have called them to do and give me the courage to come alongside them. Strengthen me with boldness to pray with them in spite of where they are in their life. Amen.”

Day 11 - Tuesday, January 16

Read Psalm 56-57

David decided to put his trust God when people were attacking him. He asks, “what can man do to me?” What a declaration of confidence! What a show of true faith and freedom from the fear of man.

Proverbs 29:25 says, “the fear of man brings a snare.” God wants us to place our trust in Him and fear Him. Not be afraid of Him, but have a healthy respect, esteem and honor for the Lord. When the Lord holds this place in our hearts, we don’t have to fear any other man.

“Father, when I am afraid of others or their opinions of me, I choose to trust in You. I fear, esteem, and honor You above any other. Thank You for peace and freedom from fear of man today in the name of Jesus. Amen.”

Day 12 - Wednesday, January 17

Read 1 Samuel 17

Saul was a seasoned warrior. Who would know better than Saul which weapons would be necessary to defeat Goliath? However, God wanted to deliver His people in a way that would leave no doubt that He had done the work. By using a shepherd boy with a small stone and a sling, no man could take credit for the victory. It was clearly God who delivered His people from Goliath and the Philistines.

When we rely on our own strength, we will experience limitations. But when we trust in God's strength, He gets the victory and the glory, and we get to be a part of His plan.

“Father, putting my name on Your plan is like Saul putting his armor on David. Please don't let me ever try to cover what You are doing. Let me be transparent, so that You always get the glory You deserve. In the name of Jesus, Amen.”

Day 13 - Thursday, January 18

Read 1 Samuel 18

Even Saul, who tried to kill David, recognized the hand of God on his life. David's success and favor was two-fold. First, David understood from his past experiences that his success was a result of the Lord being with him. Second, David was given the responsibility of leading the king's men into battle against the enemies of Israel. David had determined in his heart to advance the kingdom of his king.

As you fast today, reflect on the victories that God has given you in your life and consider them as preparation and confirmation of the victories to come. Praise God for where He has positioned you in your life and commit to advancing the Kingdom of your King, Jesus.

"Dear Jesus, thank You for all that You have done and are going to do in my life. Help me to acknowledge You and receive Your grace in everything that I do. Allow my life to bring glory to Your name as You empower me to advance Your Kingdom in my world. Amen."

Day 14 - Friday, January 19

Read Mark 7

The Pharisees and teachers of the law had been given the commands, statutes and teachings of God, but seemed to miss the whole point. Their adaptation of the law had become empty, hollow and heartless.

We are given a solemn warning that if we are not careful, we can fall into this same trap. It is easy to settle into a routine and focus on schedules and to-do-lists. Although we don't mean for it to happen, the voice of God can get drowned out by these distractions. Let this time of prayer and fasting disrupt the regular patterns of life. Make time to meditate on God's Word and listen to His Voice. You will experience clarity where there was confusion, and peace during the trial.

"Father, I choose to disconnect from all the distractions to draw closer to You. Let my eyes be steady on what You have set before me and help me never lose focus on the things of substance that produce life. Amen."

Questions Along the Way

“What if I stumble, what if I fall?”

“What if I mess up and eat something not on my plan?”

“What if I just can’t go without something—like caffeine—as I had planned to?”

“Will God still honor my fast?”

I remember the time a few years ago when someone asked me if I had ever “messed up” on a fast. I had to laugh because, of course, the answer was a huge yes. It has actually taken me years of developing a lifestyle of fasting to build up to where I am now. Over time, fasting does get easier, but this is a spiritual activity where it’s easy for condemnation to try and take root. Don’t let that happen!

Choosing to start a fast is quite similar to setting goals in life. It is good for us to challenge ourselves and set the bar high. Each time I prepare for a fast, I set goals that are typically beyond what I did the last time, and they’re always beyond what I know I can do in my own strength. When we set the bar high, sometimes the natural result is failure to meet the goal. But that should never stop us from trying to reach as high as we can. So what if you mess up? What should you do then? Proverbs 24:16 says, “For though a righteous man falls seven times, he rises again, but the wicked are brought down by calamity” (NIV).

This “fall down, get back up” idea has been a formative principle in my life in so many areas, and it’s no different in the arena of devotion to God. What matters is not that we stumble, but that we get back up! True failure only occurs when we let adversity keep us down.

Maybe you have tried to participate in this fast but have found yourself stumbling along the way. I want to encourage you to try it again during this last week. Don’t be discouraged by looking at the times you gave in to hunger or messed up. But be encouraged by this: when we draw near to God, He draws near to us (James 4:8). He wants to draw near to you, so keep it up! I am confident that you will be rewarded and blessed for your perseverance.

Day 15 - Saturday, January 20

Read 1 Samuel 19

The Israelites were under attack. Jonathan, an intercessor for David, saw the hand of God upon David's life and knew that he stood blameless before God.

Our victories may cause jealousy to surface in others and may result in us being undeservingly persecuted. However, we can take comfort in knowing that Christ intercedes for us and gives us favor. He also surrounds us with people who will support and encourage us. We can't always control how people treat us, but we can control how we honor God.

“Lord, help me to honor You as I seek to draw closer to You during this season of prayer and fasting. Even through persecution, allow my conduct to glorify You. In the name of Jesus, help me to intercede on behalf of others who may be dealing with judgment, jealousy, and unwarranted attacks. Amen.”

FASTING TIP

For many, week three feels like a breakthrough week! By now your body should be thoroughly detoxified, and if you successfully navigated that metabolic shift that happened in week two, you're likely to find yourself coasting until day twenty-one.

As your body has become used to less food, you are more than likely experiencing fewer hunger pangs. Since your body has detoxified, you are most likely also experiencing less achiness and headaches. Because your body is not using as much energy to digest food, it can devote more energy into the restorative processes. During this last week you may also find you are sleeping better too.

Spiritually speaking, this week can be really powerful as you find yourself in your Fast Zone and your mind has made the leap to focusing more on God.

Day 16 - Sunday, January 21

Read 1 Samuel 20

How fortunate David was to have a friend like Jonathan, someone who stuck by him through thick and thin. Jonathan was a friend that would even feel a righteous anger because of the shameful treatment that David received.

What kind of friends do you have? We must strive to have friends in our life like Jonathan – the ones who will encourage and support us, no matter what. In addition, we must always strive to be a “Jonathan” kind of friends to others.

“God, please help me to surround myself with people that will always point me towards Your best. Today as I fast and seek You, I ask you to reveal to me the people that You have placed in my life that will help me become the person You are calling me to be. Amen.”

Day 17 - Monday, January 22

Read Mark 8

Jesus was clearly a man of power and action, not just words. The miracles he performed came from a motivation of love and a desire to draw people to God.

The more convinced we become that Jesus is God, the more we will see his power and love. His mighty works show us He is able to save anyone regardless of their past. The miracle of forgiveness brings healing, wholeness and powerful change to those who trust Him.

*“Lord, I declare Your goodness and that You are the only true God. I thank You that You are still a God of action today. I wait with an expectant, hopeful heart as Your mighty hand touches my life, bringing healing and salvation.
In Jesus name, Amen.”*

Day 18 - Tuesday, January 23

Read 1 Samuel 21

David is running from Saul and for a moment, is overcome by fear. At this low point in his life, he acts like a crazy man before the king of Gath. David was beyond the point of simply experiencing fear. He let fear control him.

Any one of us can be subject to fear when we are tired, hurt, or emotionally low. In order to ensure we don't start doing wrong things and going places we should avoid, we must remain deeply connected to God. His love will cast out any fear, no matter how great.

*"Father, help us manage our lives to stay healthy - in body, soul, and spirit. Please fill us with Your spirit and give us boldness of faith in place of fear.
In Jesus name, Amen."*

Day 19 - Wednesday, January 24

Read 1 Samuel 22

David and Abiathar were Saul's next target. While it would have made more sense for David to send Abiathar away, he instead drew him in and offered his protection. David took a risk to keep Abiathar safe. David acted in a lot of ways like Jesus - not turning a blind eye to someone in need, even amidst trials of his own.

No matter what the situation, when it seems all hope is lost Jesus' response is the same: draw closer to Him. He will offer His unmatched and perfect protection every time.

"God, I pray that You strengthen my resolve to put my entire trust in You, knowing You will always protect me from harm. Help me to never turn away from other people in need just because I may be going through difficulty myself. Amen."

Day 20 - Thursday, January 25

Read Mark 9

The disciples found themselves unprepared to deal with this particular situation. Because Jesus led a lifestyle of prayer and fasting, He was prepared to deal with the issue when the time came. He didn't wait until the problem arose to prepare – a lifestyle of prayer and fasting had prepared Him for it.

Prayer and fasting prepares us for what lies ahead. We don't have to wait for an emergency to arise before we prepare. Let us prepare ahead of time so that when confronted with adversity or challenges, we can face them head on.

“Dear God, as I set time aside today to pray, fast and seek You, I ask that you strengthen me, prepare me, and fill me with Your Word. God, You see everything and hold all my days in Your hands. You know exactly what I have need of before I even ask for it. Thank You for Your grace that enables me to face whatever lies ahead. In Jesus name, Amen.”

Day 21 - Friday, January 26

Read 1 Samuel 23

David was surrounded by opposition. Even though he knew he was about to be betrayed, he still prayed and worshipped God. In the end, God came through. David found himself separated from his enemies, delivered from danger and resting in the stronghold of En-gedi.

David's life was filled with trials. At times, he was running for his life, at times he was hiding out in caves. It was a fight. But there were two things that remained throughout David's entire life: worship and prayer. David knew that when it came down to it – regardless of what he went through – that was all he needed.

Over the last 21 days, we've established a consistency in prayer, worship and drawing closer to God. Remain consistent, recognizing that this is the lifeline to strength and the only way to overcome any adversity.

“Dear God, thank You for this time and all that You have done in and through my life over these last 21 days. I commit to keeping this space open to You and trust that You are all I need. I love you and thank you. Amen.”

The Next 21 Days

We want to encourage you to be just as intentional about the next twenty-one days...and the twenty-one days after that...and so on. Remember, keeping the fire and zeal for God burning in your heart is what will keep your relationship with Him fresh and new. It will allow you to continue serving and obeying Him from a position of want to, and you will experience the joy of your salvation everyday—regardless of what life brings your way!

The principles you have practiced in these twenty-one days are very easy to sustain long-term. Prayer, fasting, and personal devotion are all quite simple to incorporate into your everyday life. Over these last twenty-one days, you've created space for God to fill. The best way to continue in these same practices is to keep that space open indefinitely. Don't allow it to close up! Protect that time and space with God and make it your priority each day.

Just like reading your Bible, praying, and attending church, fasting is also a lifestyle. We encourage you to establish a frequency and consistency of fasting in your life. Remember, this is not a legalistic thing. This is an "I get to experience God" thing. It is like going into heaven for a tune up, so we can keep our passion for God and enjoyment of Him at a high level. We encourage you to do the same. Figure out what works for you, commit to it, and make it a part of your life.