



January 13, 2020 - January 19, 2020

Welcome to 21 Days of Prayer + Fasting with Riverview Community Church

We are so glad that you have decided to participate in an extended time of prayer, fasting and personal devotion. Prayer + fasting provides us with the time to seek the heart of Jesus for us as individuals and as a church. Our hope is that this time will refresh you personally and our church.

This 21 Days of Prayer + Fasting was intentionally designed to be flexible so you can participate at any level. This packet includes: a Biblical guide to fasting, different fasting options, prayer guide, brief devotional thoughts and reflection questions. We will also be coming together on Wednesday, January 8th, 15th, and 22nd at 6:30p for worship and prayer. Each Sunday you will be able to pick up that week's prayer and fasting resources. If you are unable to make it on a Sunday, you can go to www.riverview.cc/grow find the prayer and fasting guide there.

As you prepare for the next 21 days, think about why you are fasting. Is it for spiritual renewal, for guidance, healing, resolution of a problem, a major decision, clarity, wisdom, for the Holy Spirit to continue working in your life from the inside out, heart first. Whatever it might be, make the primary goal of the next 21 days to know Jesus more.

During the next 21 days, I am praying and believing God for:

We are praying expectantly with you and for you,

- The Leadership of Riverview Community Church

Fasting Guide |

The following has been adapted from *Your Personal Guide to Fasting and Prayer*, by Dr. Bill Bright, via Campus Crusade for Christ International and Fair Haven Church in Hudsonville, MI.

Fasting and prayer has the potential for significant impact in our lives. Through fasting and prayer is one way that the Holy Spirit begins to change our lives from the inside out, heart first. When we fast and pray with the intention of seeking God's face, with a broken, repentant, and contrite spirit, God hears from heaven and heals our lives, church, community, nation and world.

Biblical fasting is denying oneself something for the sake of seeking and honoring God. Pastor and Author Stovall Weems says that *"prayer is connecting with God; fasting is disconnecting ourselves from the world."* Generally, fasting is going without food but in addition to food, it can also be from things that keep us connected to the world. This can include television, social media, video games, phones, and more.

What does the Bible teach about fasting?

In the Old Testament, Israel celebrated annually with fasting. The most prominent being the Day of Atonement. There were also occasional fasts that tied to specific events and individuals. Some of those occasions include: grieving (1 Samuel 31:13, Nehemiah 1:4), repenting (1 Samuel 7:6, 1 Kings 21:27), to express humility (Ezra 8:21, Psalm 69:10) and also expressing a need for God's guidance and help. With each of these fasts, we are reminded of our dependence on God.

In the New Testament, Jesus assumes that fasting will be part of His disciple's spiritual life (Matthew 6:16-18). Throughout the New Testament, we are taught that God's Word nourishes us (Matthew 4:1-4), doing God's will sustains us (John 4:31-35), and that Jesus Himself will sustain us (John 6:48-50).

What is the purpose of fasting?

Fasting is designed to intensify our dependence on God by weakening our dependence on food and other things. How does this happen? Fasting reveals and heals our dependence on food and other things to fill the discomfort caused by low self-esteem, unfulfilling work, unloving relationships, uncontrollable circumstances, etc. It removes the false peace derived from the pleasure of eating. Richard Foster, an author and theologian says, *"More than any other discipline, fasting reveals the things that control us. This is a wonderful benefit to the true disciple who longs to be transformed into the image of Jesus Christ. We cover up what is inside us with food and other good things, but in fasting these things surface. If pride controls us, it will be revealed almost immediately. David writes, 'I humbled my soul with fasting' (Psalm 69:10). Anger, bitterness, jealousy, strife, fear - if they are within us, they will surface during fasting."*

Fasting also teaches us that we can go without getting what we want and survive. Fasting can teach us moderation, self-control, not only in relation to food but in other areas of our lives as well. It can also teach us contentment (1 Timothy 6:6).

Lastly, fasting helps us express and deepens our hunger for God. Again, Foster says, *“Fasting reminds us that we are sustained ‘by every word that proceeds from the mouth of God:’ (Matthew 4:4). Food does not sustain us; God sustains us. In Christ, ‘All things hold together’ (Colossians 1:17). Therefore, in experiencing of fasting, we are abstaining from food or other activities and feasting on God’s word.”* Fasting is always centered on God and must be about him.

01) Clarify the purpose of our fast.

Why are you fasting? Ask the Holy Spirit to clarify His leading and objectives for your prayer fast. This will enable you to pray more specifically and strategically.

02) Specify the kind of fast you will do.

Jesus believed that fasting would be a spiritual discipline of his followers (Matthew 6:16-18, 9:14-15). Before you fast, decide how up front: what type of fast, how long, how much time each day will you devote to prayer and God’s word? Determining these things ahead of time will help you sustain your fast when physical temptations and life’s pressures tempt you to abandon it.

03) Prepare your heart, mind, and body for fasting.

Fasting is not a spur-of-the-moment thing. We must prepare. The very foundation of fasting and prayer is repentance. Unconfessed sin can hinder your prayers. There are several things you can do to prepare your heart. Fasting requires some precautions. Consult your physician if you take prescription medication or have a chronic ailment. Some people should never fast without professional supervision. If you are choosing to fast food, prepare your body by eating smaller meals before starting a fast. Avoid high fat and sugary foods. Eating raw fruits and vegetables prior to your fast is helpful. Prepare your heart and mind through confessing your sins, accepting God’s forgiveness, seeking forgiveness from all whom you have offended, forgive those who have hurt you and make amends as the Holy Spirit leads. Begin your time of fasting and prayer with an expectant heart. Do not underestimate spiritual opposition. Satan sometimes intensifies the natural battle between body and spirit (Galatians 5:16-17). Lastly, in Matthew, Jesus instructs us not to let others know about our fasting. The strict details of your fast should not be something you constantly talk about to others. It remains between you and God.

Types of Fasts

Biblical fasting almost always concerns food. Since the purpose of fasting is to focus on God, to humble ourselves, and to remind ourselves that we are sustained by every word that proceeds from the mouth of God, then the task in fasting is connecting our “going without” to “hungering for God.” Fasting is a discipline that can take a very long time to understand well. Do not let this fact keep you from fasting or intimidate you.

01) Abstaining from certain types of foods (meat, sweets, etc.) - Daniel 10:3

This type of fast is good for beginners to fasting or those with health needs and special or restrictive diets. Choose to abstain from something like breads, sweets, sodas, coffee or caffeine, red meat, etc. Stick to only fruits and vegetables.

Determine the timing and duration of your fast and begin. You may choose to go without the specific type of food on only certain days like Wednesdays, or you may go without during the weekends, or other certain days. This fast is for 21 days but that does not mean you must go without for all of the 21 days. Determine the time and duration ahead of time and stick to it.

02) Abstaining from all food - Esther 4:16, Acts 9:9

This is a much more difficult fast but can be broken up time and duration. This seems to be the most common fast we see in the Bible and it is also the most intimidating, but don't let it scare you. Fasting from all food is not scary if you determine beforehand when you will do so and for how long. Some ideas to help: (1) Start slow. Begin with fasting for only a part of a day. Do that for a week, or perhaps three days a week. (2) Fast from food but not beverages. This means that according to your timing and duration, you would not eat any solid foods but only water, juices, smoothies, or simple broths. (3) 24 Hour fast. This means you would get up and eat a good breakfast and drink only water or juice until the following breakfast the next day. Set aside specific times for prayer. (4) As you have progressed, maybe do a two or three day fast.

03) Abstaining from entertainment - Daniel 6:18

Fasting from entertainment can be particularly helpful and accessible to kids and teens. Think about abstaining from television, social media, video games, streaming services, phones, music, texting, etc. for the duration of your fast.

The plan you choose is your decision. We are all at different places and our spirituality is never a cause for comparison or competition. Your fast should present a level of challenge in it, but know your body, know your options, and most importantly, seek God in prayer about this and follow what the Holy Spirit leads you to do. It is also important to not let what you eat or do not eat become the focus of your fast. This is a time to disconnect with your regular patterns and habits in order to connect with God more closely.

Even if you do not choose to fast, please seek God with us in prayer.

21 Days of Prayer

Day 13 | January 13, 2020

John 11:38-44 -

³⁸ Jesus was still angry as he arrived at the tomb, a cave with a stone rolled across its entrance. ³⁹ “Roll the stone aside,” Jesus told them. But Martha, the dead man’s sister, protested, “Lord, he has been dead for four days. The smell will be terrible.” ⁴⁰ Jesus responded, “Didn’t I tell you that you would see God’s glory if you believe?” ⁴¹ So they rolled the stone aside. Then Jesus looked up to heaven and said, “Father, thank you for hearing me. ⁴² You always hear me, but I said it out loud for the sake of all these people standing here, so that they will believe you sent me.” ⁴³ Then Jesus shouted, “Lazarus, come out!” ⁴⁴ And the dead man came out, his hands and feet bound in grave-clothes, his face wrapped in a head-cloth. Jesus told them, “Unwrap him and let him go!”

Matthew 12:33-37

³³ “A tree is identified by its fruit. If a tree is good, its fruit will be good. If a tree is bad, its fruit will be bad. ³⁴ You brood of snakes! How could evil men like you speak what is good and right? For whatever is in your heart determines what you say. ³⁵ A good person produces good things from the treasury of a good heart, and an evil person produces evil things from the treasury of an evil heart. ³⁶ And I tell you this, you must give an account on judgment day for every idle word you speak. ³⁷ The words you say will either acquit you or condemn you.”

Proverbs 12:18

Some people make cutting remarks, but the words of the wise bring healing.

The story of Lazarus’ death and resurrection reflects the power of Jesus’ spoken Word. He already knew in His heart the miracle that was about to take place, but His words spoke the miracle into existence.

Prayer is our declaration of our dependence on God, our words can be manifestations of what’s happening in our hearts. There is power in the words we speak and it is important to keep our hearts filled with the truth from the Scriptures so that our words will produce good fruit.

As we continue this season of prayer and fasting, God wants to change your life from the inside out, heart first through the Holy Spirit so that you can share the good things in your heart with others. Use your words to build up the people around you as you go on the mission with Jesus to help heal the world.

Reflect:

- 01) Do you find the words you use building others up or tearing others down?
- 02) How can you use the power of your spoken words to share Jesus with other people?
- 03) Who is someone you could encourage today with your words?

Prayer Focus:

- Ask God to give you the words and discernment that may help someone today.
- Pray that your words will be edifying, encouraging, and aligned with God’s Word.

Day 14 | January 14, 2020

Galatians 5:19-25

¹⁹ When you follow the desires of your sinful nature, the results are very clear: sexual immorality, impurity, lustful pleasures, ²⁰ idolatry, sorcery, hostility, quarreling, jealousy, outbursts of anger, selfish ambition, dissension, division, ²¹ envy, drunkenness, wild parties, and other sins like these. Let me tell you again, as I have before, that anyone living that sort of life will not inherit the Kingdom of God. ²² But the Holy Spirit produces this kind of fruit in our lives: love, joy, peace, patience, kindness, goodness, faithfulness, ²³ gentleness, and self-control. There is no law against these things! ²⁴ Those who belong to Christ Jesus have nailed the passions and desires of their sinful nature to his cross and crucified them there. ²⁵ Since we are living by the Spirit, let us follow the Spirit's leading in every part of our lives.

1 Corinthians 13:4-7

⁴ Love is patient and kind. Love is not jealous or boastful or proud ⁵ or rude. It does not demand its own way. It is not irritable, and it keeps no record of being wronged. ⁶ It does not rejoice about injustice but rejoices whenever the truth wins out. ⁷ Love never gives up, never loses faith, is always hopeful, and endures through every circumstance.

When we choose to follow Jesus, the Holy Spirit lives within us. What the Holy Spirit begins to do is change our lives from the inside out, heart first. The desires and behaviors that break God's heart begin to change into desires and behaviors that honor God. As the Holy Spirit works in our lives, the fruits of love, joy, peace, patience, kindness, goodness, faithfulness, gentleness, and self-control begin to come out of our lives. Throughout Galatians 5, the Apostle Paul tells us that the Holy Spirit will also help us to serve others, love others and live humbly. Ultimately, what the Holy Spirit does in our lives is enables us to Love Jesus. Love People.

Love is a loaded word. If you asked 10 people to tell you what love is, you'd get 10 different answers. When it comes to loving Jesus and loving people, the Scriptures make it clear what this true, Godly love looks like. Together, these two portions of scriptures begin to show us what it looks like when the Holy Spirit changes our lives from the inside out, heart first. They weave together a beautiful picture of what loving Jesus and loving people and allowing the Holy Spirit to change us really looks like.

Reflect:

- 01) Which fruits of the Spirit in Galatians 5:22 do you feel you already have?
- 02) Which fruits of the Spirit in Galatians 5:22 do you think you should ask God to help you with more?
- 03) When it comes to loving others as described in 1 Corinthians 13:4-7, what are some ways that you could better love others?

Prayer Focus:

- Pray through each Fruit of the Spirit for your life.
- Pray through the descriptions of love in 1 Corinthians 13 and ask the Holy Spirit to help you love others that way.

Day 15 | January 15, 2020

Today is a scheduled day of fasting with prayer + worship at 6:30p.

Psalm 18:2

The Lord is my rock, my fortress, and my savior; my God is my rock, in whom I find protection. He is my shield, the power that saves me, and my place of safety.

Psalm 16:11

You will show me the way of life, granting me the joy of your presence and the pleasures of living with you forever.

Romans 10:9-10

⁹ If you openly declare that Jesus is Lord and believe in your heart that God raised him from the dead, you will be saved. ¹⁰ For it is by believing in your heart that you are made right with God, and it is by openly declaring your faith that you are saved.

We've all probably heard or have first hand experience with a story like this: someone grows up in a loving home. It may even be a Christian home. They are clearly loved and cared for but something in them begins to change. For whatever reason, the way they view themselves and their life is through a broken lens. Somewhere, addiction becomes part of their story. Drugs, alcohol, sexual addiction, eating disorders, etc. Their family and friends try every method they can think of to help but nothing seems to work. Finally, out of exhaustion, realizing the situations was out of their hands, they place everything entirely in God's hands.

No one seems able to explain it but what seemed completely hopeless, God saves. Somewhere, somehow, someday, that person felt the love of Jesus, and that altered the course of their life. The broken lens they looked through becomes clear and they begin to see new life. Family and friends count all their failed attempts and all the times they prayed and realize that it is only God that saves and delivers.

As much as we have seen this story, we also see the other side of the story where addiction still has a hold on a person's life. The struggle that we face is continuing to pray and believe that God will set them free and restore their life. If this is part of your story right now, don't give up. Keep praying and trusting God for freedom.

Reflect:

- 01) Who does your heart ache for God to deliver and save?
- 02) Will you trust that God will do the impossible in their life?
- 03) During this time, how can you take refuge in God?

Prayer Focus:

- Pray for people in your life, yourself included, that are struggle with addiction.
- Pray for people in your life that need to experience the love of Jesus and choose to follow Him.

Day 16 | January 16, 2020

Matthew 17:14-16

¹⁴ At the foot of the mountain, a large crowd was waiting for them. A man came and knelt before Jesus and said, ¹⁵ “Lord, have mercy on my son. He has seizures and suffers terribly. He often falls into the fire or into the water. ¹⁶ So I brought him to your disciples, but they couldn’t heal him.”

James 4:6-10

⁶ And he gives grace generously. As the Scriptures say, “God opposes the proud but gives grace to the humble.” ⁷ So humble yourselves before God. Resist the devil, and he will flee from you. ⁸ Come close to God, and God will come close to you. Wash your hands, you sinners; purify your hearts, for your loyalty is divided between God and the world. ⁹ Let there be tears for what you have done. Let there be sorrow and deep grief. Let there be sadness instead of laughter, and gloom instead of joy. ¹⁰ Humble yourselves before the Lord, and he will lift you up in honor.

The man in Matthew 17 demonstrates an incredible amount of humility. In the midst of a crowd, this man approaches Jesus and kneels before him believing that Jesus would heal his son. Before his belief, his approach was humble and submitted to what Jesus would choose to do. If you read further into the story, you find that the disciples were unable to heal the man’s son. Instead of being upset or giving up and living in disappointment, the man chooses to seek after Jesus for his son’s healing.

Being humble before God is realizing our need of Him, submitting to His will, pursuing Him and being confident the outcome will occur in God’s perfect timing. When we approach Jesus with humility, we can be encouraged that we will find relief. It is easy to be offended or disappointed or want to give up when we don’t see the outcome we hoped for. Instead of choosing to live that way, we need to make the choice to pursue Jesus and know that He is never late and His solution is always perfect.

Prayer is a posture of humility; it is humbling yourself before the Lord daily and bringing your cares and concerns to Him. He wants to meet you where you are and answer your every need.

Reflect:

- 01) Are you discouraged? Write down your discouragement and release it to God.
- 02) Ask the Holy Spirit to show you where in your life you need to be more humble.
- 03) Where in your life do you need to humble yourself and rely on God?

Prayer Focus:

- Pray for humility before God
- Ask God to remove disappointment and discouragement from you and to help you trust Him and His perfect will.

Day 17 | January 17, 2020

Romans 8:5-6

⁵ Those who are dominated by the sinful nature think about sinful things, but those who are controlled by the Holy Spirit think about things that please the Spirit. ⁶ So letting your sinful nature control your mind leads to death. But letting the Spirit control your mind leads to life and peace.

Psalm 51

Have mercy on me, O God, because of your unfailing love. Because of your great compassion, blot out the stain of my sins. ² Wash me clean from my guilt. Purify me from my sin. ³ For I recognize my rebellion; it haunts me day and night. ⁴ Against you, and you alone, have I sinned; I have done what is evil in your sight. You will be proved right in what you say, and your judgment against me is just. ⁵ For I was born a sinner—yes, from the moment my mother conceived me. ⁶ But you desire honesty from the womb, teaching me wisdom even there. ⁷ Purify me from my sins, and I will be clean; wash me, and I will be whiter than snow. ⁸ Oh, give me back my joy again; you have broken me—now let me rejoice. ⁹ Don't keep looking at my sins. Remove the stain of my guilt. ¹⁰ Create in me a clean heart, O God. Renew a loyal spirit within me. ¹¹ Do not banish me from your presence, and don't take your Holy Spirit from me. ¹² Restore to me the joy of your salvation, and make me willing to obey you. ¹³ Then I will teach your ways to rebels, and they will return to you. ¹⁴ Forgive me for shedding blood, O God who saves; then I will joyfully sing of your forgiveness. ¹⁵ Unseal my lips, O Lord, that my mouth may praise you. ¹⁶ You do not desire a sacrifice, or I would offer one. You do not want a burnt offering. ¹⁷ The sacrifice you desire is a broken spirit. You will not reject a broken and repentant heart, O God. ¹⁸ Look with favor on Zion and help her; rebuild the walls of Jerusalem. ¹⁹ Then you will be pleased with sacrifices offered in the right spirit—with burnt offerings and whole burnt offerings. Then bulls will again be sacrificed on your altar.

Have you ever looked at the ceiling fan blades or in the deep recesses of your couch cushions and noticed the dirt and filth that builds up over time? Even though we might clean on a regular basis, there are times when we need to go a little deeper. We realize that what appeared to be clean on the surface was in all actuality, quite filthy.

The same happens spiritually. We go about our routine and things can build up over time. We can regularly worship, pray, read the Scriptures and attend church but the different pressures of life can quietly build up and eventually consume us. We lose our peace, joy, passion, hope, fun of life without even realizing it.

Fasting is the deep cleaning that helps us take our mind off of the things of this world and refresh our focus on the things of God. It is an incredibly effective way to get into the nooks and crannies of our soul and bring all those dusty old habits, broken mindsets, and rusty attitudes out into the light. As we fast and pray, the things that we have lost eventually return.

Reflect:

01) Ask God to show you any areas of your life where you could use a refreshed spiritual focus.

Prayer Focus:

- Pray that God will cleanse your heart, renew your spirit, and restore the joy of your salvation.

Day 18 | January 18, 2020

Luke 4:1-2 , 14-15

¹ Then Jesus, full of the Holy Spirit, returned from the Jordan River. He was led by the Spirit in the wilderness, ² where he was tempted by the devil for forty days. Jesus ate nothing all that time and became very hungry.

¹⁴ Then Jesus returned to Galilee, filled with the Holy Spirit's power. Reports about him spread quickly through the whole region. ¹⁵ He taught regularly in their synagogues and was praised by everyone.

Psalm 37:3-7

³ Trust in the Lord and do good. Then you will live safely in the land and prosper. ⁴ Take delight in the Lord, and he will give you your heart's desires. ⁵ Commit everything you do to the Lord. Trust him, and he will help you. ⁶ He will make your innocence radiate like the dawn, and the justice of your cause will shine like the noonday sun. ⁷ Be still in the presence of the Lord, and wait patiently for him to act. Don't worry about evil people who prosper or fret about their wicked schemes.

Fasting and prayer are helpful in bringing clarity to God's specific path for our lives. Many times following a season of prayer and fasting we can have a more defined understanding of the part that we play in the body of Christ and a greater sense of our specific spiritual giftings.

In Luke 4, it describes the circumstances surrounding the beginning of Jesus' public ministry. Notice that He went into the desert "full of the Holy Spirit." However, He returned to Galilee, "filled with the Holy Spirit's power." Being full of the Spirit is knowing God and his character; walking in the power of the Spirit is when we know that we have the God-given strength and authority in our lives to walk out His will.

The power of the Holy Spirit is essential for us to accomplish the assignment God has for our lives. God could be leading you to fast so that you can receive His specific instructions for your life. He will empower you, not just to know Him, but to walk in His power to accomplish what He has called you to do.

Reflect:

01) Do you have areas of your life that need more clarity?

02) Are you walking in the power of the Spirit and living in God's purpose for your life? Write down those things God is speaking to you.

Prayer Focus:

- Pray that God continually reveals His purpose and gives you increasing clarity and strength to walk it out.
- Thank God for choosing you and giving you a purpose.

Day 19 | January 19, 2020

Psalm 92:1

It is good to give thanks to the Lord, to sing praises to the Most High.

Psalm 100:2

Worship the Lord with gladness. Come before him, singing with joy.

Joshua 24:14-15

¹⁴ “So fear the Lord and serve him wholeheartedly. Put away forever the idols your ancestors worshiped when they lived beyond the Euphrates River and in Egypt. Serve the Lord alone. ¹⁵ But if you refuse to serve the Lord, then choose today whom you will serve. Would you prefer the gods your ancestors served beyond the Euphrates? Or will it be the gods of the Amorites in whose land you now live? But as for me and my family, we will serve the Lord.”

Life as a follower of Jesus was never intended to be a solitary one. Jesus shared His life with the twelve disciples and then taught them to share their lives with others. The early followers of Jesus gathered together to eat and study the Scriptures. What we do each week in church is an expression of shared belief in Jesus - His body, a community of faith that gains strength and courage through worship.

But a full and meaningful life of following Jesus is built on much more than an hour at church each week or every other week or once a month. It requires personal devotion and interdependency with others in prayer, study, fellowship, and praise. We need to follow and serve Jesus in community.

God has a group for you and a place for you to belong. This community is a smaller version of the church. It is in this community that we learn to love and accept others, pray together, support each other, encourage each other, and partake in communion together.

Making the time to be a part of this community is an important discipline. To share our hearts, burdens, triumphs, successes, failures, weaknesses, with others has the ability to move us from defeat to victory. Building this habit of worshipping together is critical to becoming the people God desires for us to become.

Reflect:

- 01) Who is in your community of faith other than the larger Riverview Community?
- 02) How do you express love, acceptance, grace, and encouragement with them?
- 03) What elements of prayer and worship are regularly missing for your time with them?

Prayer Focus:

- Ask God to help you have a community of faith to belong to other than the church as a whole.
- Thank God for the people in your life that you get to be in community with.