



**21  
DAYS**

**PRAYER + FASTING**  
STARTING JANUARY 1, 2020

**January 20, 2020 - January 22, 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 8<sup>th</sup>, 15<sup>th</sup>, and 22<sup>nd</sup> 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](http://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:

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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.

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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 in 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 20 | January 20, 2020**

**Proverbs 4:23**

Guard your heart above all else, for it determines the course of your life.

**Matthew 5:8**

God blesses those whose hearts are pure, for they will see God.

**1 Samuel 16:6-7, 11-12**

<sup>6</sup> When they arrived, Samuel took one look at Eliab and thought, "Surely this is the Lord's anointed!" <sup>7</sup> But the Lord said to Samuel, "Don't judge by his appearance or height, for I have rejected him. The Lord doesn't see things the way you see them. People judge by outward appearance, but the Lord looks at the heart."

<sup>11</sup> Then Samuel asked, "Are these all the sons you have?" "There is still the youngest," Jesse replied. "But he's out in the fields watching the sheep and goats." "Send for him at once," Samuel said. "We will not sit down to eat until he arrives." <sup>12</sup> So Jesse sent for him. He was dark and handsome, with beautiful eyes. And the Lord said, "This is the one; anoint him."

If a tree falls in the forest and no one is there to hear it, does it make a noise? Whether a noise is heard or not, the fallen tree is dead, and there is now a hole in the forest. There is impact. It's been said integrity is what you do when no one is looking. Do you think there is really an impact? How about with your relationship with God?

God looks at the heart. We cannot hide this from Him. The core of who we are, He knows. What we look at, think about, talk of, and act on is all made clear to Jesus. Integrity is from the heart.

Consistently poor integrity that disobeys God is defiance to God. It slowly builds a wall in between us and Him until we can hardly hear or see God at all. Poor integrity hinders our connection with God. Good integrity is not being perfect but being humble, repentant, and obedience to God even when no one is watching.

**REFLECT:**

- Do you value integrity?
- Why does God choose to look at the heart of a person?
- How might God use your integrity to impact the people around you?

**PRAYER FOCUS:**

- Ask the Holy Spirit to show you where there are areas in your life where you lack integrity.
- Ask God to strengthen your integrity and use it for His glory.

## Day 21 | January 21, 2020

### Matthew 6:9-15

<sup>9</sup> Pray like this: Our Father in heaven, may your name be kept holy. <sup>10</sup> May your Kingdom come soon. May your will be done on earth, as it is in heaven. <sup>11</sup> Give us today the food we need, <sup>12</sup> and forgive us our sins, as we have forgiven those who sin against us. <sup>13</sup> And don't let us yield to temptation, but rescue us from the evil one. <sup>14</sup> "If you forgive those who sin against you, your heavenly Father will forgive you. <sup>15</sup> But if you refuse to forgive others, your Father will not forgive your sins.

When Jesus taught His disciples to pray, He provided them with some insight into what "heaven on earth" might look like. Heaven is where God's will reigns supreme. If we pray like Jesus instructs us to, "Your Kingdom come...your will be done" the purest motivation for our prayers is that God will be glorified and that His will would reign supreme in our own lives.

As individuals, we may need to pray that God's will be unhindered in our own lives. Instead of imposing His will upon us, God gives us the choice to surrender to His will and to trust Him. We must yield to Jesus' lordship in our lives and when we do, we begin to experience alignment with heaven and we position ourselves to taste a little bit of it here on earth. His will becomes what we desire most and we join Him on His mission to help heal the world. There, we will find the most fulfilling and joyous life, but it all starts with individuals saying "yes" to Jesus.

### REFLECT:

- What does God's will "on earth as it is in heaven" look like in your life?
- Do the desires of your heart line up with the will of God?
- Reflect on each verse of the Lord's Prayer and it's meaning to us.

### PRAYER FOCUS:

- Pray for God's will to be done "on earth as it is in heaven."
- Pray through each verse of the Lord's Prayer.

## Day 22 | January 22, 2020

\* Tonight is a prayer and worship night at 6:30p.

### Psalm 80:18-19

<sup>18</sup> Then we will never abandon you again. Revive us so we can call on your name once more.

<sup>19</sup> Turn us again to yourself, O Lord God of Heaven's Armies. Make your face shine down upon us. Only then will we be saved.

### 2 Chronicles 7:14-16

<sup>14</sup> Then if my people who are called by my name will humble themselves and pray and seek my face and turn from their wicked ways, I will hear from heaven and will forgive their sins and restore their land. <sup>15</sup> My eyes will be open and my ears attentive to every prayer made in this place. <sup>16</sup> For I have chosen this Temple and set it apart to be holy—a place where my name will be honored forever. I will always watch over it, for it is dear to my heart.

It is pointed out that 2 Chronicles 7 is addressed specifically to Israel. That is true. However, this passage shows God's heart for any people and any land. What God wants from us first is to humble ourselves and admit that God is God and we are not.

Secondly, we must submit to God and come to Him in brokenness and repentance.

Thirdly, we must pray and seek God's face. No revival or awakening comes without prayer. Extensive, fervent, corporate and continual prayer. These prayers are locked in on God's glory, not our needs.

Lastly, we must turn from our wicked ways. God wants obedience. We cannot just pray prayers for forgiveness but we must also do the deeds of repentance and obey God in every part of our life. When we do these things, God will hear us, forgive us and heal our land. He will pour out His favor and His blessing.

### REFLECT:

- During this time of prayer and fasting ,have you humbled yourself before God?
- How will you continue having a humbled state before God after our prayer and fasting time ends?

### PRAYER FOCUS:

- Pray for revival in our hearts as individuals, our church, our city, our nation, and our world.
- Pray that you will continue to regularly seek God's heart in addition to His hand.