



January 6, 2020 - January 12, 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 6 | January 6, 2020

Matthew 17:18-20

¹⁸ Then Jesus rebuked the demon in the boy, and it left him. From that moment the boy was well. ¹⁹ Afterward the disciples asked Jesus privately, "Why couldn't we cast out that demon?" ²⁰ "You don't have enough faith," Jesus told them. "I tell you the truth, if you had faith even as small as a mustard seed, you could say to this mountain, 'Move from here to there,' and it would move. Nothing would be impossible."

Mark 9:20-24

²⁰ So they brought the boy. But when the evil spirit saw Jesus, it threw the child into a violent convulsion, and he fell to the ground, writhing and foaming at the mouth. ²¹ "How long has this been happening?" Jesus asked the boy's father. He replied, "Since he was a little boy. ²² The spirit often throws him into the fire or into water, trying to kill him. Have mercy on us and help us, if you can." ²³ "What do you mean, 'If I can'?" Jesus asked. "Anything is possible if a person believes." ²⁴ The father instantly cried out, "I do believe, but help me overcome my unbelief!"

2 Corinthians 10:3-5

³ We are human, but we don't wage war as humans do. ⁴ We use God's mighty weapons, not worldly weapons, to knock down the strongholds of human reasoning and to destroy false arguments. ⁵ We destroy every proud obstacle that keeps people from knowing God. We capture their rebellious thoughts and teach them to obey Christ.

When we fast and pray, we don't do so to change God or His will. When we pray and fast, we are the ones that are changed as we come into alignment with God. This helps us overcome our doubts and fears. When we have the faith to believe, we can pray with confidence knowing that "nothing will be impossible" as we live to bring glory to God.

We must ask God to strengthen our hearts to fully believe Him and believe His word. It is okay to recognize and acknowledge if you struggle with unbelief. This is the first step in allowing God to strengthen your faith and bring you into alignment with His plan for your life.

Reflect:

01) What is it that you need faith to believe God for?

02) Where do you need to pray with confidence knowing that "nothing is impossible with God"?

03) Ask the Holy Spirit to free you from your unbelief.

Prayer Focus:

- Confess your unbelief. Ask God to help strengthen your spirit and to overcome where you struggle to believe.
- Thank God for the grace and goodness that He has given you.

Day 7 | January 7, 2020

Psalm 43:3

Send out your light and your truth; let them guide me. Let them lead me to your holy mountain, to the place where you live.

Ephesians 1:15-18

¹⁵ Ever since I first heard of your strong faith in the Lord Jesus and your love for God's people everywhere, ¹⁶ I have not stopped thanking God for you. I pray for you constantly, ¹⁷ asking God, the glorious Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, to give you spiritual wisdom and insight so that you might grow in your knowledge of God. ¹⁸ I pray that your hearts will be flooded with light so that you can understand the confident hope he has given to those he called—his holy people who are his rich and glorious inheritance.

We all know that life and truth come from Jesus. We've looked elsewhere for life and only found emptiness. Even though we are convinced of life and truth coming only from Jesus, we too often slide slowly into the normal routine of life, unaware of Jesus' leading in our lives. Our prayer must be to ask Jesus to open our eyes to his leading.

In Psalm 43, the Psalmist knows that God's light and truth are the best guides for our lives. The reason they are the best guide for our lives is because they lead us into God's presence. As we continue in this season of fasting and prayer, we must ask God to continue to open our eyes and give us the power of the Holy Spirit to lead and guide us and to provide us with the wisdom we need that can only come from him.

Reflect:

- 01) Where have you sensed God giving you the gift of wisdom and discernment in your life?
- 02) Where in your life and in what ways in your life do you need to ask God for wisdom?

Prayer Focus:

- Ask God for wisdom.
- Pray that you might know Jesus more deeply and better understand His heart for you.

Day 8 | January 8, 2020

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

Psalm 24:1-6

¹ The earth is the Lord's, and everything in it. The world and all its people belong to him. ² For he laid the earth's foundation on the seas and built it on the ocean depths. ³ Who may climb the mountain of the Lord? Who may stand in his holy place? ⁴ Only those whose hands and hearts are pure, who do not worship idols and never tell lies. ⁵ They will receive the Lord's blessing and have a right relationship with God their savior. ⁶ Such people may seek you and worship in your presence, O God of Jacob.

James 4:7-8

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.

Hebrews 4:14-16

¹⁴ So then, since we have a great High Priest who has entered heaven, Jesus the Son of God, let us hold firmly to what we believe. ¹⁵ This High Priest of ours understands our weaknesses, for he faced all of the same testings we do, yet he did not sin. ¹⁶ So let us come boldly to the throne of our gracious God. There we will receive his mercy, and we will find grace to help us when we need it most.

Romans 2:4

Don't you see how wonderfully kind, tolerant, and patient God is with you? Does this mean nothing to you? Can't you see that his kindness is intended to turn you from your sin?

How can we sincerely draw close to a God who is all powerful, all knowing, and fully aware of all the reasons we do not belong in His presence? It is common as followers of Jesus for us to be insecure when we think about approaching God. At times, we feel unworthy, disqualified, or not 'holy' enough. The reason we struggle this way is because we know ourselves and our propensity to sin. We know our inability to give God everything He deserves.

However, God knows our struggles and He is the answer to our struggles. Our confidence in drawing near to God is not based on our performance but what Jesus has already done. Therefore we can come to God with boldness and confidence and we will find grace.

Additionally, our confidence is based on God's love for us. We know that we can trust His love. The things that disqualify us - sin, weakness, failure, flaws, etc. - these things provide convincing proof of God's love. God knows our past failures and our current weaknesses and still loves us. Through our sins and weaknesses, we are given the opportunity to really know God's love for us and we can trust His love.

Reflect:

- 01) Ask God to reveal anything in your life that would hinder your ability to come into God's presence.
- 02) According to Romans 2:4, what leads us into repentance?
- 03) Write down and reflect on where you have seen God's love in your life.

Prayer Focus:

- Pray to experience God's love and presence in your life.
- Pray that others will be able to experience God's love as well.

Day 9 | January 9, 2020

Romans 7:18-20

¹⁸ And I know that nothing good lives in me, that is, in my sinful nature. I want to do what is right, but I can't. ¹⁹ I want to do what is good, but I don't. I don't want to do what is wrong, but I do it anyway. ²⁰ But if I do what I don't want to do, I am not really the one doing wrong; it is sin living in me that does it.

Colossians 3:12-14

¹² Since God chose you to be the holy people he loves, you must clothe yourselves with tenderhearted mercy, kindness, humility, gentleness, and patience. ¹³ Make allowance for each other's faults, and forgive anyone who offends you. Remember, the Lord forgave you, so you must forgive others. ¹⁴ Above all, clothe yourselves with love, which binds us all together in perfect harmony.

Hebrews 10:15-16

¹⁵ And the Holy Spirit also testifies that this is so. For he says, ¹⁶ "This is the new covenant I will make with my people on that day, says the Lord: I will put my laws in their hearts, and I will write them on their minds."

In Romans 7, Paul describes an internal war that often is waged within each of us. We desire to do what is right but in our own efforts, we don't have the power to and we mess up. The good news is that we don't have to rely on our own strength to make the right decisions. Our sinful nature does not have to dominate us and our thinking. However, the only way we can live this lifestyle is by yielding to the Holy Spirit and relying on his strength to change us from the inside out, heart first.

When we're facing struggles, rely on the Holy Spirit working in us. He changes our lives from the inside inside out, heart first. This empowers us to do what is right. It is our job to to daily lay down our stubborn will and yield to the will of God. Instead of trusting in your own strength, learn to yield to and become totally reliant upon the Holy Spirit.

Reflect:

01) Do you have areas in your life that are causing an internal struggle?

02) Make a decision today that will yield you t the Holy Spirit and lean on His strength, not your own, to overcome obstacles of sin and selfishness in your life.

03) Surrender and release those areas to God, knowing He will help you.

Prayer Focus:

- Ask God to give you the desires to please Him in all things.,
- Confess and ask for forgiveness in areas where you choose stubbornness and pride.
- Ask God for his grace and willingness to yield to the Holy Spirit daily.

Day 10 | January 10, 2020

Matthew 7:7-11

⁷ “Keep on asking, and you will receive what you ask for. Keep on seeking, and you will find. Keep on knocking, and the door will be opened to you. ⁸ For everyone who asks, receives. Everyone who seeks, finds. And to everyone who knocks, the door will be opened. ⁹ “You parents—if your children ask for a loaf of bread, do you give them a stone instead? ¹⁰ Or if they ask for a fish, do you give them a snake? Of course not! ¹¹ So if you sinful people know how to give good gifts to your children, how much more will your heavenly Father give good gifts to those who ask him.

Psalm 141:1-2

¹ O Lord, I am calling to you. Please hurry! Listen when I cry to you for help! ² Accept my prayer as incense offered to you, and my upraised hands as an evening offering.

Ephesians 6:18

Pray in the Spirit at all times and on every occasion. Stay alert and be persistent in your prayers for all believers everywhere.

Matthew 6:9-13

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

James 5:16b

The earnest prayer of a righteous person has great power and produces wonderful results

Fervency is about levels of intensity, passion and persistence. Many times, we can lose our passion in prayer or stop praying for certain things altogether because we lose heart or give up. But God invites us to keep praying and trust Him for an answer in His time. God hears your prayers and will bring an answer in His perfect timing. Don't be discouraged or disheartened if the answer is not exactly what you expected. Commit to praying to God with passion and persistence, trusting His answer will come in His perfect timing and way.

As we get closer to finishing our second week, continue to pray fervently for the main areas of concern in your life. Trust God to bring an answer as you journal your thoughts and inspirations through this time.

Reflect:

- What have you been praying for that you have given up on?
- Identify the main areas of concern in your life and begin to pray for them.

Prayer Focus:

- Ask God to stir your heart to prayer and give you the ears to listen to God in the quiet places of your heart.
- Pray for the main areas of concern in your life and the things you have given up on.

Day 11 | January 11, 2020

Psalms 61:1-4

O God, listen to my cry! Hear my prayer! ² From the ends of the earth, I cry to you for help when my heart is overwhelmed. Lead me to the towering rock of safety, ³ for you are my safe refuge, a fortress where my enemies cannot reach me. ⁴ Let me live forever in your sanctuary, safe beneath the shelter of your wings!

Romans 15:13

I pray that God, the source of hope, will fill you completely with joy and peace because you trust in him. Then you will overflow with confident hope through the power of the Holy Spirit.

John 15:1-4

"I am the true grapevine, and my Father is the gardener. ² He cuts off every branch of mine that doesn't produce fruit, and he prunes the branches that do bear fruit so they will produce even more. ³ You have already been pruned and purified by the message I have given you. ⁴ Remain in me, and I will remain in you. For a branch cannot produce fruit if it is severed from the vine, and you cannot be fruitful unless you remain in me.

Have you ever had a moment where you noticed how tired you were? As you fast, how tired you are may be highlighted. Many times we are physically, spiritually, or emotionally tired. We have so many things pulling at our time from daily tasks and less and less rest. Many times, we can feel like we have nothing left to give.

It takes discipline to keep our devotions at the top of the priority list. The Scriptures are clear that if we are to bear fruit, we must stay connected to the vine. He will prune us and cut off what is not bearing fruit for His purpose.

God has a plan and a purpose for your life. For our lives to be changed from the inside out, heart first and to discover our purpose, we need the Holy Spirit in our lives. If we put God first and stay connected to Him, He will give us the strength and power to do the tasks He has set before us.

Reflect:

- 01) What areas of your life are not bearing fruit and can be pruned?
- 02) Where will you find more time in your schedule to stay connected to Jesus?

Prayer Focus

- Ask God to help you stay connected to Him
- Ask God to reveal your purpose.
- Pray that God will continue to prune your life and cut away the areas that are not producing fruit.

Day 12 | January 12, 2020

Psalm 18:36

You have made a wide path for my feet to keep them from slipping.

Psalm 37:23-24

²³ The Lord directs the steps of the godly. He delights in every detail of their lives. ²⁴ Though they stumble, they will never fall, for the Lord holds them by the hand.

More often than not, we are the ones to decide what we want to be or do with our life. When you were a kid, you were always asked, “What do you want to be when you grow up?” There was an unspoken pressure to decide and determine a course of action. Now that you are an adult, more often than not, we are the ones deciding what we want to be or do with our life. However, finding and fulfilling your destiny can only be done in God. What we find in the Scriptures is that God’s plan for your life is far more superior to yours.

Joseph was given a dream, David had an encounter with a prophet, and Joshua had a mentor. In all three cases, God conveyed His plan into the lives of these individuals. However, holding on the dream is tough when you face prison time and accusations as Joseph did. The words of the prophet can fade away when you find yourself hiding and living in caves, as David did. The disciplines of your apprenticeship imparted by a mentor can become a lonely place when he is gone, as Joshua discovered.

However, all three experienced that it is only the word from God that can sustain you in the long term. His plan for your life is better than your own. The greatest joy, fulfillment, and success come when we seek Him about the direction for our lives and commit to follow His plan for us.

Reflect:

01) Where do you believe God is leading you?

02) Are you willing to surrender your plan to discover and live out God’s plan for you?

Prayer Focus:

- Ask God to give you the next step in His plan for you.
- Ask God to help you listen and clearly sense God’s guidance for your life.