

PRAY CO5 GUIDELINES FOR PRAYER AND FASTING

At Church On Five, we are convinced that prayer is the foundation of our relationship with God and our faith and we have been called to pray for our city.

During the month of August, we want to focus on increasing and developing our awareness of the presence of God in our lives. We believe that through prayer, we are strengthened. Through prayer, we find healing and clarity. Prayer gives us the capacity to grow, transform and become attuned to the work of the Holy Spirit.

We believe that if we want to have an impact in our city, we must devote ourselves to prayer (Acts 2:42, Colossians 4:2), pay attention to where God is at work and say yes to his invitation to partner with him to bring about renewal and transformation of our city.

Throughout August, we are offering various opportunities to learn more about prayer, participate in prayer, discover new ways of praying and deepen our understanding of God.

Here is a brief explanation of why we pray and fast.

PRAYER:

Prayer changes us. And prayer changes circumstances. We are working with God to determine the future!

Prayer involves a learning process. Let's not make prayer too complicated.

We do not have to be perfect or have everything sorted out before we begin to pray.

Prayer is listening.

Compassion and concern for others was an evident feature in Jesus. Compassion should cause us to pray. An inner sense of compassion for something or someone is a very clear indication that this is a prayer project for you.

Prayer is an invitation to become more in tune with the voice of the Holy Spirit and his leading.

FASTING:

Throughout Scripture, fasting refers to abstaining from food for *spiritual* purposes. Fasting must centre on God.

We are not required by spiritual Law to fast. It is not a command. Jesus did not say "If you fast" or "you must fast". He said "*when* you fast..." and proceeded with instruction on fasting.

Fasting is an opportunity to meet with God in our weakness and to know him more deeply.

What if I fail at fasting... will God be angry and disappointed in me? NO! God is not let down by this. He just wants to encourage you to try again. He is delighted that you even gave it a try. Every failure leads to a new learning process.

Fasting helps keep balance in our life and can bring breakthroughs in the spiritual realm that could never be had in any other way.

GUIDELINES FOR FASTING AND PRAYER

Within this context, we have selected Wednesdays as a day to fast and pray. You have the freedom to fast from one meal, two meals or for the whole day. Or you can do it differently each week. Whatever you decide, here are some guidelines to help you get started.

On your day of fasting...

- 1) Begin your time with an offering of prayer to the Lord. This is a day set aside to seek the Lord, grow in understanding and intimacy with him, and to listen for his voice in your life. Our focus for prayer and fasting is to pray for the renewal of our city. Offer him the day and invite him to guide you through it. Thank him in advance for what will happen.
- 2) Inform only the people who need to know you are fasting (e.g. your family as you will be abstaining from eating with them).
- 3) Go about your normal business of the day, making sure to include intentional times of prayer and any other spiritual discipline you feel called to engage in (scripture reading, silence, etc). Incorporate the weekly encouragement and devotion into this time if you so choose.
- 4) When you feel hunger pangs acknowledge them as a call to pray, surrendering your hunger to the Lord. Use the time you would normally eat to spend time with the Lord.
- 5) Journal your experience. Include not only what you are hearing from the Lord, but what you are learning about fasting, what emotions you are feeling, and how you are responding to the whole experience.
- 6) At the end of your fast, offer a prayer of gratitude to the Lord for what you heard and experienced together.

INSTRUCTIONS FOR FASTING

Do not try to "stock up" on food before entering into your time of fasting. It is better to eat a lighter meal prior to fasting.

Make sure you drink plenty of liquids, preferably water. Herbal teas or coffee without cream or sugar are acceptable. Clear juice such as apple juice can be included but be careful of sugar content.

Break your fast with fruit and/or vegetables and slowly ease your body back into eating.

If you are struggling during a particular day of fasting, do not hesitate to reach out to a fellow participant for support, strength and prayer. We are in this together!

NOTE: If you have an underlying health condition (diabetes, eating disorder) or are pregnant, you should not engage in this kind of fast or check with your doctor first.