

WELCOME TO 21 DAYS OF PRAYER & FASTING

As we begin 2024, our prayer at City Church is that we will come together as a fellowship to Love God, Love Others, and Serve Our City. To that end, we have set aside three weeks to lay a foundation for the work God wants to do among us.

You are invited to join us for the next 21 Days on an incredible faith journey praying for God's leading in our lives, our church, our families, our city and beyond!

Will you pray expectantly that God will display His power and faithfulness to us in this season? Will you take time to fast, giving up something temporal to be filled spiritually by God in preparation for this next season?

We believe that as we come together, fully submitted to God in prayer, He will display both His person and His power in unprecedented ways. He will advance the Gospel so that more people will meet Him, know Him, and follow Him.

But this is just the start. We pray that God will use this season to increase your faith and that you will walk away spiritually refreshed and more in love with Jesus; that a habit of prayer would be formed that goes beyond 21 days and becomes a lifestyle of dependence upon God in prayer.

HOW TO USE THIS GUIDE

This booklet is designed to guide us individually and corporately through our 21 days of prayer. Beyond that, it will also give you some tools for continuing into prayer from Day 22 and beyond. Each day of this booklet contains a prayer list, a prayer focus for the day that coincides with Sunday's message, a scripture with some thoughts around that passage, and a space to reflect and write down any of your thoughts and prayers. Our hope is that you will find this helpful; we know that there is no formula for talking to God but practicing different ways to pray can help us find deeper purpose and connection to Him through our prayer time.

In providing this guide, our purpose is not to pressure or overwhelm you. Our goal is simply to help you get more comfortable talking with God, and aid in making your personal prayer time even more meaningful. The most important thing will be your commitment to regularly enter God's presence through prayer. We recommend that you set apart a place (your favorite chair, in nature, or during your commute—don't close your eyes!) and a dedicated time to spend with God.

The objective of this guide is to help you find a new level of purpose, effectiveness, and enjoyment in your prayer life. While it requires discipline and commitment for prayer to develop into a daily habit, we also want to remember that it's a "get to" not a "got to" thing. In other words, it's a privilege to be able to come to God in prayer.

WHAT IS PRAYER?

The most basic definition of prayer is “talking to God.” Prayer is not meditation or passive reflection; it is a direct address to God. It is the communication of the human soul with the Lord who created the soul.

Paul wrote, “Do not be anxious about anything, but in every situation, by prayer and petition, with thanksgiving, present your requests to God. And the peace of God, which transcends all understanding, will guard your hearts and your minds in Christ Jesus” (Philippians 4:6–7). Worry about nothing; pray about everything.

Everything? Yes, God wants us to talk with Him about everything. How often should we pray? The Biblical answer is “pray without ceasing” (1 Thessalonians 5:17). This can be on our knees with hands clasped together, but it doesn't have to be limited to that.

Prayer can be audible or silent, private or public, formal or informal. You can pray any time of day: while doing chores, working, resting, during family time or alone time. We should keep a running conversation going with God all day long. Eyes open or closed, out loud or in our hearts, standing, kneeling, or walking, we can be creating a continual dialogue with God.

Some people asked Smith Wigglesworth, the great apostle of faith in the first half of the 20th century, about prayer. “Smith Wigglesworth,” they asked, “you’re a man of faith and miracles, you’ve raised people from the dead. You’ve cast out more demons than we’ve had hot dinners. Tell us, how long do you pray every day?” He replied, “I don’t ever pray any longer than twenty minutes.” His questioners were very surprised by his answer, expecting the time to be so much longer. After pausing for effect, Smith Wigglesworth continued, “Yes, but I never go twenty minutes without praying.”

Your prayer life is not measured in minutes. Prayer is a lifestyle. Prayer is a constant two-way communication with God. There is no special formula for how to pray. We should just do it. We can pray in any and all circumstances. Prayer develops our relationship with God and demonstrates our trust and utter dependence upon Him.

WHAT IS FASTING?

As part of these 21 days, we encourage you to consider fasting. You may have never fasted before, but it is a Biblical concept. You can read further about fasting in Isaiah 58:3-9; Matthew 6:16-18, Matthew 9:14-15, Luke 18:1-14.

We love Mark Buchanan’s perspective on fasting. **see appendix for this article*

Currently, fasting is trendy. The media talks a lot about the health benefits of fasting. According to Scripture, though, fasting is a spiritual discipline of deliberately abstaining from the normal routines of life. Its purpose is to spend purposeful time in prayer and the study of God's word, seeking to align our will with His will.

Fasting is not about getting God's attention. Ultimately, fasting is about redirecting our focus.

When we talk about fasting, we usually think about food and that's because food is our most common addiction. But fasting is God's ordained mechanism for dealing with all of the addictions in our lives. Many people choose to fast from TV, or news, or social media, or some other hobby/pastime. Really, fasting is more about replacing than abstaining. It is filling our lives with God's Word instead of the other things in our lives that captivate our attention. It is finding satisfaction and enjoyment in God and God alone. Fasting helps us humble ourselves before the Lord and positions us to experience spiritual breakthroughs in our lives.

4 TYPES OF FASTS:

Complete Fast:

In this type of fast, you drink only liquids, typically water or juice. You might begin with fasting for only a part of a day (lunch, or lunch and dinner). Do this for one day, three days, or a week. You determine the timing and duration, but take a step of faith.

Selective Fast:

This is described in the book of Daniel. For three weeks, Daniel, who was a prophet during a time when Israel lived in exile, abstained from "delicacies" like meat and wine (Daniel 10:3).

Intermittent Fast:

This fast is sometimes called the "Jewish Fast" and involves abstaining from eating any type of food in the morning and afternoon. This can either correlate to specific times of the day, such as 6:00 am to 3:00 pm, or from sun-up to sundown.

Soul Fast:

This fast is about dealing with areas in your life that have the potential to become idols. After the fast, you can ask the Holy Spirit whether those elements/activities might be resumed in healthy doses. The Soul Fast is a great option if you do not have much experience fasting, or if you have health issues that prevent you from fasting food.

YOU MAY FIND THE FOLLOWING PIECES OF ADVICE HELPFUL

1: Set some goals

What would you like to see God do in these 21 days? Begin with clear personal goals, church goals, breakthrough goals. Be specific. Why are you fasting? Is there something you are specifically praying for? 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.

2: Feast on the Word of God

Prayer and fasting are ultimately expressions of humility and dependence on God. They are about focusing specifically for the next 21 days on hearing from God by replacing the daily intake of food, entertainment and human contact with time spent in the Word, actively listening to what the Holy Spirit is saying to you.

3: Open your life to the Lord

One of the great benefits of a focused time of prayer and 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. Prayer and 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.

4: Expect God to move

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). These next 21 days have the potential to impact you and your relationship with Jesus as well as the countless people and situations that we will pray and fast over. If you have doubt, ask God to meet you in your doubts and lead you in overcoming them, just as the apostles prayed, "Lord, increase our faith!" (Luke 17:5).