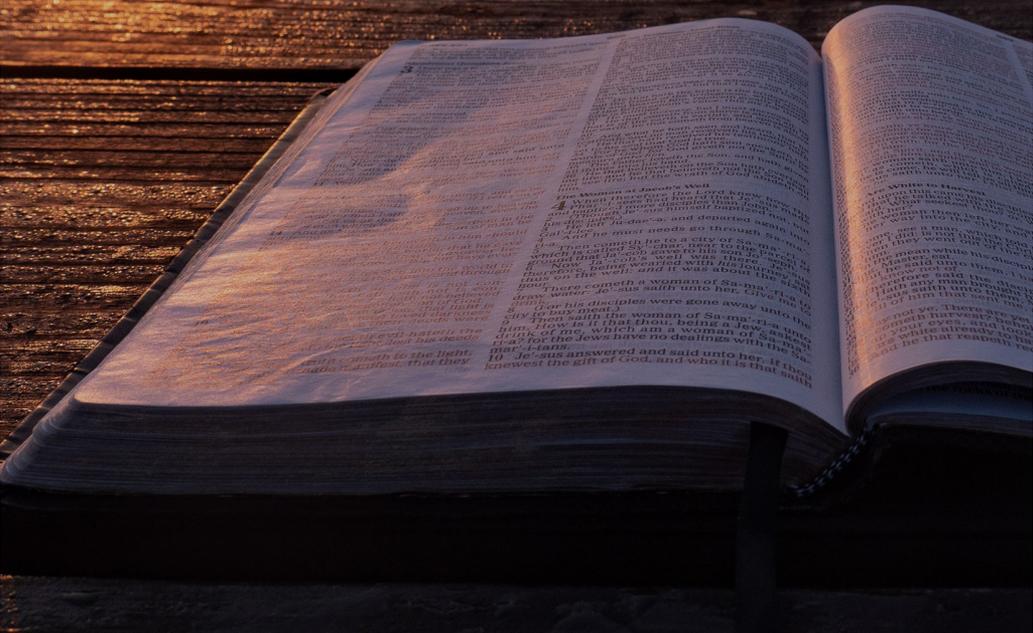




Prayer + FASTING Guide



If I were to stand on a street corner and ask, “What comes to mind when you hear the word *fast*?”, most people would say something about the pace of life these days – *it is fast*, probably too fast. They would talk about the word “fast” as an adverb of speed and not a verb of abstinence. Curiously, there’s a common root for both connotations of the word.

“Going fast” – traveling or working fast, or having a fast connection to the internet – *that* kind of fast comes from the same word as “fasting,” in the sense of abstaining from food. Our English word “fast” comes from the Old English *fæsten*, which denoted “firm,” such as “to hold fast” to some decision or principle. We also may talk about “a long, fast friend,” meaning someone who has been a secure friend, someone who has been tight with you – a steadfast friend. This word “fast” came to be a verb, applied to the abstinence of food, because of one’s “holding fast to a particular observance,” which was a firm resolve. That’s how the scriptures speak of fasting: more an affirmation of resolve rather than a renunciation of some desire.

Jesus talks about fasting in the Sermon on the Mount when He teaches about giving and praying. Jesus presumes we do all 3: pray, give, fast. In Matthew’s gospel, we hear Jesus saying, “*When* you fast ...” Not “*If*,” but “*When* you fast ...” He makes the assumption that people would hold to the practice of fasting, since fasting was a common practice in His day; they simply needed instruction on *how* to do it properly.

We’re inviting you into a time of prayer and fasting, with various options to suit your personal circumstances. We are inviting you to hold fast to Jesus and seek His face because we are resolved that nothing matters more.

~ Pastor James Paton

“Announce a time of fasting; call the people together for a solemn meeting. Bring the leaders and all the people of the land into the Temple of the Lord your God, and cry out to Him there.”
(Joel 1:14 NLT)

WHAT IS FASTING?

Fasting in its simplest definition is understood as “voluntary abstinence from food or drink, especially as a religious duty.” As followers of Jesus, the purpose of all spiritual disciplines, including fasting, is to help us to become more like Jesus. We follow in His footsteps. Fasting helps us — personally and corporately — become aware of how God desires to work in us and through us.

We should never be motivated by the idea that our fasting will move God to do what we want; we cannot manipulate God. ***The purpose of our fasting is to draw us closer to God and to seek His will for our lives.***

“One of the greatest spiritual benefits of fasting is becoming more attentive to God — becoming more aware of our own inadequacies and His adequacy, our own contingencies and His self-sufficiency — and listening to what He wants us to be and do.” (E.L. Towns)

In the book of Esther, the Jews were on the verge of destruction because of Haman, one of the king’s advisors. Haman was filled with anger against a Jew named Mordecai because he didn’t bow or worship him. Haman looked for a way to destroy all of Mordecai’s people, the Jews, throughout the whole kingdom of Xerxes.

Mordecai knew he was in trouble so he sought help from Queen Esther, who was his niece. Now, for Queen Esther to approach the king for help without being summoned first was very dangerous — she would literally be risking her life. So Esther called a fast.

“Go, gather together all the Jews who are in Susa, and fast for me. Do not eat or drink for three days, night or day. I and my attendants will fast as you do. When this is done, I will go to the king, even though it is against the law. And if I perish, I perish.” (Esther 4:15-16 NIV)

Those 3 days of prayer and fasting changed history forever.

This is her moment. Esther goes to see the king, knowing she is quite possibly walking to her death. However, because Esther approached the king on behalf of her people, they would become a nation not of defeat but of favour and rescue.

When God's people fast with proper motive — seeking His will — and with a humble and repentant spirit, amazing things happen.

This is our moment. We're going to pray and fast as a church community. We're going to seek God's will for our lives, our church, our communities, our country, and our world.

DECIDING HOW LONG

Choose either a **1-, 3-, or 5-day fast** from food Monday, March 11-Friday, March 15. You may fast for as long as you like; however, use wisdom and pray for guidance. Ask the Holy Spirit to lead and guide you when making this decision.

Beginners are advised to start slowly. Keep yourself hydrated at all times. Drink plenty of water and juices. Remember to replace your time of eating with prayer and reflecting on the Word. We've provided 5 days of guided prayer and Scripture for everyone to lean into together as a community, regardless of how long you choose to fast.

WHAT TO EXPECT

When you fast your body detoxifies, eliminating toxins from your system. This can cause mild discomfort such as headaches and irritability during withdrawal from caffeine and sugars. And naturally, you'll have hunger pains. Limit your activity and exercise moderately; take time to rest.

You're following Jesus' example when you fast. Spend time listening to praise and worship. Pray as often as you can throughout the day. Get away from the normal distractions as much as possible and keep your heart and mind set on seeking God's will for us.

As you enter this time of heightened spiritual devotion, be aware that Satan will do everything he can to pull you away from your prayer and Bible reading time. When you feel the enemy trying to discourage you, immediately go to God in prayer and ask Him to strengthen you in the face of difficulties and temptations.

ENDING THE FAST

Don't overeat when the time comes to end your fast. Because your digestive system has most likely reduced enzyme production and affected the mucus lining in your stomach, overeating or ingesting certain foods too quickly may cause you to experience nausea, stomach aches, or diarrhea. Introducing regular foods slowly will help you break a fast safely, without disrupting your digestive system.

WORDS OF CAUTION

Please consult your family physician before attempting to fast if you have a physical condition that's affected by your food intake, have any type of chronic illness, and/or are taking any kind of prescription medications. If you're unsure whether you should participate for any reason, please consult your family physician.

Infants and small children should **not** fast. Older children who can understand fasting can participate by choosing a food they usually have each day and giving that up during the fast. The important thing is to explain to them that we are giving up something for the purpose of focusing on God.

Daily Prayer Guide

In story of Nehemiah, he had something of great importance to do, something that might even be life-threatening. And as the story unfolds we read that he prayed to God and then spoke to the king. As a community, what if we did this? What if we prayed to God first? That's exactly what we hope we'll continue to learn together as a community of faith — to see prayer as a first response rather than a last resort.

Understanding the necessity of prayer is not enough. In order for it to become a part of our life, it needs to become something we look forward to doing. When we discover the beauty of daily conversation with Him, we'll experience the presence of God that will change our lives forever.

Regardless of how long you choose to fast, we want to encourage everyone to join us for 5 days of prayer. The following Bible verses and simple questions will guide us in our quiet times of prayer.

The Prayer Room (located just inside the east entrance of the building) will be open every evening—

March 11-17, 7:00-9:00 pm.

All are welcome to use this space for quiet prayer; prayer team members will be available to pray with.

Day 1: Easter

Our focus on the cross this Easter will result in many people encountering Jesus in faith. We're praying for life change! We also need to pray for everyone involved as we prepare, and that God will already be working in the hearts of people we'll invite to celebrate Easter weekend with us (*April 20/21, 2019*).

"Praise be to the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ! In His great mercy He has given us new birth into a living hope through the resurrection of Jesus Christ from the dead." (1 Peter 1:3 NIV)

- What is this passage telling me about God?
- What is this passage telling me about myself? What is God trying to say to me right now?
- What does this Scripture have to say to me about my life at this time?
- Spend some time praying for those who will encounter Jesus this Easter at FAC.

Day 2: Southwest Campus

Our focus today is the Southwest Campus. Pray for the establishment of the core team, people who will commit to the new campus, the communities we're reaching out to, Pastor Jeff as he leads, a successful launch in September 2019, and ultimately for people coming to know Jesus as a result.

"... if My people, who are called by My name, will humble themselves and pray and seek My face and turn from their wicked ways, then I will hear from heaven, and I will forgive their sin and heal their land. Now My eyes will be open and My ears attentive to the prayers offered in this place." (2 Chronicles 7:14-15 NIV)

- What is this passage telling me about God?
- What is this passage telling me about myself? What is God trying to say to me right now?
- What does this Scripture have to say to me about my life at this time?
- Spend some time praying for the coming FAC Southwest Campus.

Day 3: Summer Outreach

Our focus today is the summer outreach opportunities through FAC. So much will be happening this summer: Discovery Camps for kids, short-term missions trips, and many other activities. We're a church on mission. Who can we tell?

***"But you will receive power when the Holy Spirit comes upon you. And you will be My witnesses, telling people about Me everywhere — in Jerusalem, throughout Judea, in Samaria, and to the ends of the earth."* (Acts 1:8 NLT)**

- What is this passage telling me about God?
- What is this passage telling me about myself? What is God trying to say to me right now?
- What does this Scripture have to say to me about my life at this time?
- Spend some time praying for outreach opportunities this summer through FAC.

Day 4: FAC Leadership

Our focus today is the leadership team here at FAC. Several on our Board of Elders and staff families are dealing with significant health challenges that seem almost impossible. But *nothing* is too hard for the Lord.

***"I urge you, first of all, to pray for all people. Ask God to help them; intercede on their behalf, and give thanks for them. Pray this way for kings and all who are in authority so that we can live peaceful and quiet lives marked by godliness and dignity. This is good and pleases God our Saviour, who wants everyone to be saved and to understand the truth."* (1 Timothy 2:1-4 NLT)**

- What is this passage telling me about God?
- What is this passage telling me about myself? What is God trying to say to me right now?
- What does this Scripture have to say to me about my life at this time?
- Spend some time praying for FAC's leadership team.

Day 5: Renewal

Our focus today is renewal for FAC. Let's pray that the Holy Spirit would blow through our church filling us with awe, transforming us to be God's holy people, wholeheartedly devoted to Him.

"Don't copy the behaviour and customs of this world, but let God transform you into a new person by changing the way you think. Then you will learn to know God's will for you, which is good and pleasing and perfect." (Romans 12:2 NLT)

- What is this passage telling me about God?
- What is this passage telling me about myself? What is God trying to say to me right now?
- What does this Scripture have to say to me about my life at this time?
- Spend some time praying for renewal for FAC, in others, and in yourself.

