

PRAYER + FASTING

January 4-10, 2020

Happy New Year! In one sense the turning of the page to a new calendar year is just a matter of pattern and tradition. In another way it is a great reminder that, especially with the Lord, there is always the opportunity for a fresh start. I want to encourage you to engage fully in this time of seeking the Lord to set a new tone for a new year. What might your year look like if you seek Him first before falling back into the usual patterns?

God makes it clear in His Word that prayer with fasting is an important practice for all believers. Jesus models it (Matthew 4:2), Jesus assumed His followers would fast (Matthew 9:14-15) and the early church fasted (Acts 13:2). In response to fasting God did great things. The idea is not that we twist God's arm, but that we receive all that He has given to His people. As we pray and fast we look forward to break-through and a fresh release of God's Spirit.

This guide contains practical information on fasting and a day-by-day theme inspired by the Vital Signs and Three Spheres sermon series. I hope it will be a jumping off point for your prayers and that the scriptures included would be used by the Holy Spirit to direct us in unity and faith.

Blessings and Love,
Pastor Matt

“Prayer is stressed over and over again in the New Testament as a vital pre-requisite for the release and experience of God’s power” – Phillip Hughes

FASTING Practical Thoughts

Fasting is simply choosing to deny ourselves of good things for a specific period of time in favour of greater things – namely time seeking the Lord in prayer. We don’t fast to impress the Lord or to earn His love or acceptance (we already have that). During times of fasting we remind ourselves of our total dependence on Jesus and willingly let go of other things so that we can focus more totally on Him. Here are just a few thoughts to help you participate this week:

- Decide what and how long you will fast
 - Total Fast –With or without water.
 - Partial Fast –Abstaining from certain types of foods and/or limiting the quantity of food. Like Daniel’s fast in Daniel 10:3 where he fasted delicacies, meat and wine. For example, you may choose to fast certain meals like lunch or to just drink fruit and vegetable juices.
 - Special Fast –Fasting things other than food like TV, Internet or Facebook.
- Fast Safely

- Especially if you are choosing to fast significant amounts of food, ensure you are healthy and consider consulting a physician if you are unsure.
- Pregnant women, diabetics and those with poor health or eating disorders should not fast.
- Fasting can be a healthy practice that is beneficial to your body. Limiting physical activity and ensuring adequate rest is important.
- Slowly reintroduce foods after fasting.
- Take time to Pray
 - Fasting is more than doing without. It is a season of reallocating priorities to focus on prayer and seeking the Lord
 - Take part in prayer meetings and schedule specific times to pray.
- Avoid Religious Displays and Beliefs
 - In Matthew 6 Jesus encourages fasting as a practice done before the Lord not for appearing more holy before people.
 - Fast as a confident child of God not a fearful slave trying to gain something from God.
- Grace
 - Fasting is difficult. Rely on the strength the Lord graciously gives to those who ask.
 - If you slip up, take it to the Lord in prayer and continue with the rest of your fast.
- Expect Results
 - This time of focused attention on prayer will accomplish much in your life and church.

SPECIFIC PRAYERS

Use the space below to record some areas of focus as you pray this week. Pray each day as the Lord leads in these areas and keep your ears open as He speaks to you. Keep your eyes open as well to watch as He brings the answers to the things you are believing for.

Prayers for my Gateway Family

Prayers for my city and world

Prayers for my life and family

MY FASTING PLAN

At the beginning of the week, prayerfully consider how you will participate in fasting and prayer. What will you fast? When will you pray? Commit your plans to the Lord and ask Him for His grace to enable you throughout the week.

SATURDAY

Jesus answered him, "Truly, truly, I say to you, unless one is born again he cannot see the kingdom of God."

John 3:3

VITAL SIGN Salvation

As we begin the week we start at square one: have you entered into the new life found in Jesus? The Gospel teaches us that all of humanity is lost and dead in sin BUT God, because of His great love, sent Jesus to rescue us from death and that by faith we can receive the abundant and eternal life He came to bring. If you have put your trust in the perfect work of Jesus and made Him the Lord of your life you are a totally new person. When you were born again God gave you a new heart, new desires, a new destiny and even a new ability to see.

Believer, begin this new year recognizing that you are new. Your sins are forgiven, you are a child of God, God will complete what He has started in you, and you can hear His voice. Thank Him today for such a great salvation.

Daily Ministry Prayer Focus

- Kids Church and our children
- Seasons Freestore

Bible Reading Plan

- Luke 4; Genesis 6-8

SUNDAY

And Jesus answered them, "Go and tell John what you hear and see: the blind receive their sight and the lame walk, lepers are cleansed and the deaf hear, the dead are raised up, and the poor have good news preached to them.

Matthew 11:4-5

VITAL SIGN Wholeness

A key feature of the ministry of Jesus was the healing of the sick. This is still a key feature of His ministry today! Not only does He bring healing to our bodies, Jesus is willing and able to bring healing and wholeness to every area of our lives breaking addictions, bondages, false patterns of thinking and more.

Take time to seek the Lord for wholeness and holiness today. Allow Him to show you areas that He wants to work in. Ask Him in faith to heal and deliver. It may be a good idea to share with another believer and pray together that you may be healed. God is a good Father and is inviting you with open arms to come to Him.

Daily Ministry Prayer Focus

- Ministry to the next generation
- Worship Team

Bible Reading Plan

- Luke 5; Genesis 9-10

MONDAY

I can do all things through Him who strengthens me.

Philippians 4:13

But you will receive power when the Holy Spirit has come upon you, and you will be my witnesses in Jerusalem and in all Judea and Samaria, and to the end of the earth.

Acts 1:8

VITAL SIGN Empowerment

You can do it! Jesus has poured out His Spirit to empower you to do all that He has called you to do. In the midst of outward challenges or tasks that seem too big for you, God wants a 'can do attitude' to well up within you. It's not a matter of you trying harder in your own strength but recognizing your need and then receiving His strength that He so wants to give you. Take time to seek the Lord for a fresh filling of His Spirit with an emphasis on receiving power in areas you need fresh strength. When you ask believe that you have received. Walk in power today!

Daily Ministry Prayer Focus

- Life Groups
- Ministry to Young Adults

Bible Reading Plan

- Luke 6; Job 1-2

TUESDAY

“Let not your hearts be troubled. Believe in God; believe also in me. In my Father’s house are many rooms. If it were not so, would I have told you that I go to prepare a place for you? And if I go and prepare a place for you, I will come again and will take you to myself, that where I am you may be also.”

John 14:1-3

VITAL SIGN Hope

Jesus is our soon coming king! Take a moment and activate your imagination: what will it be like when Jesus physically and personally returns to earth in a way that will be noticeable around the world. He is coming for His church and we will be with Him forever. What a day it will be!

Allowing the truth of the return of Jesus to rest in our hearts stirs faith that draws us forward. In any circumstance we know that there is a certain hope that things will be made right and your present circumstance is not the way it will always be.

In prayer today, talk to the Lord about things that make you feel hopeless and let Him replace those things with hope that remains.

Daily Ministry Prayer Focus

- Discipleship Ministries (eg Operation: Solid Lives)
- Missions

Bible Reading Plan

- Luke 7; Job 3-4

WEDNESDAY

And he said to him, "You shall love the Lord your God with all your heart and with all your soul and with all your mind. This is the great and first commandment."

Matthew 22:37-38

SPHERE ONE Genuine Relationship with God

Many people in our world will acknowledge that God does exist and perhaps even have a vague appreciation that He is good but this unspecific response falls far short of God's desire. He has invited us into a relationship with Him that is all consuming. He wants all of us and this is appropriate, not just because He is our creator, but also because in love He gave Himself for us. Your love is a response to His limitless love for you.

Present yourself to the Lord today. Acknowledge Him as your God. Recognize His authority and lordship. Recommit yourself to love Him with all of you. Allow Him to show you areas that you have withheld and determine that you will love Him in action in those areas today.

Daily Ministry Prayer Focus

- Administration & Maintenance
- Elders & Church Council

Bible Reading Plan

- Luke 8; Job 5-6

THURSDAY

*So then, as we have opportunity, let us do good to everyone,
and especially to those who are of the household of faith.*

Galatians 6:10

SPHERE TWO Genuine Relationship with God's People

Jesus' strategy to grow His church is often so different from our modern approaches. He did not expect the church to rely on slick methods, striving for positions of earthly authority, or other things that look wise to the world. His method is love. In particular the supernatural love that causes genuine love to grow among believers. Love that leads to service, compassion, friendship and sacrifice.

What does your love level look like towards Jesus' bride? Does it mirror His passionate love or look more like passive indifference? Ask the Lord to increase your love and in fact the love of the whole Gateway family one for another. May the God of love multiply our love that the world would see and glorify Him.

Daily Ministry Prayer Focus

- Pastor Matt & Deanna
- Hospitality Team

Bible Reading Plan

- Luke 9; Job 7-8

FRIDAY

*"You are the light of the world.
A city set on a hill cannot be hidden.
Matthew 5:14*

*And He said to them, "Go into all the world
and proclaim the gospel to the whole creation.
Mark 16:15*

SPHERE THREE Genuine Relationship with the World
God's great love for the world led to real action; the gift and sacrifice of Jesus. His love still pulses for this world and is being directed through us, His people, to the world. God's desire is that everyone would be saved and we are now the ambassadors tasked with proclaiming the gospel.

Take time to pray in three ways today:

1. Pray that you would not be conformed to the world.
2. Pray for people in your life who need to be saved.
3. Pray for boldness to speak and demonstrate the gospel to them.

Now look for and respond to the opportunities that He will bring you.

Daily Ministry Prayer Focus

- Sound & Technical Team
- Ministries to Men & Women

Bible Reading Plan

- Luke 10; Job 9-10

