

21
Days
prayer + fasting

JANUARY 22 — FEBRUARY 11



SENT
CHURCH

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Sent Church family,

A new year is upon us and I am sure, like me, you are already facing the busyness of everyday life with its demands, deadlines and distractions. However, the annual rhythm that marks the turn of the calendar year affords us an opportunity to set our hearts early on the things that matter most and pursue them with holy zeal.

As I shared recently, this year is focused on “**Multiplication**” and in order to do that we must prioritize our spiritual walk and growth in godliness as individuals, families and as a church. With that in mind, the necessary margin needs to be created in our lives for that priority to have its place.

To that end, I am calling our entire church family to **21 Days of Prayer and Fasting from January 22 – February 11**. We will host three Thursday night prayer gatherings on January 25, February 1 and 8 at 7PM. These will be times for us to seek the Lord together.

This Fasting and Prayer guide will give you some options for what type of fast you may want to participate in along with specific prayer focus points for each day of the fast.

HOW CAN YOU JOIN THE 21 DAY EXPERIENCE?

- Make a personal commitment to fast during the 21 days.
- Mark your calendar to attend our weekly prayer gatherings on January 25, February 1 and 8 at 7PM.
- Pause for prayer every day. You may want to set a daily alert to pray at a specific time each day.
- Use the enclosed prayer guide for daily prayer themes.

I am believing that God will use this focused time of Fasting and Prayer to increase our hunger for Him, to grow in passion for His presence and His Word, grow in our love for the saints, and that we would engage with His mission. This will be a year of unprecedented multiplication in every area!

May this season of fasting and prayer be the most exciting, challenging, and intense time of the year for you individually and for our entire church.

May the Lord grant us every grace to be diligent during these 21 Days of seeking His face.

- Pastor Dan

Prayer

Our primary goal during a season of prayer and fasting is to know and experience Jesus more. Don't overcomplicate this. Make time to pray daily. If you don't plan to pray, chances are you won't. Make it a goal to develop a habit of daily prayer. Start with 5 - 10 minutes. You may want to set a daily calendar alert so that you can pray at a set time. Pray simply. Talk to God plainly. If you are finding it difficult to disconnect and focus on prayer, you may want to play some worship music to prepare your heart for prayer.

We all have things we want to see answered when we pray. We may be tempted to think that because we are dedicating this extended time to prayer and fasting that we have a formula for answered prayer. But prayer is not a means to "bend God's ear" so that He will listen and do what we ask. Prayer is a means for us to draw closer to God. To commune with Him.

So we don't approach prayer and fasting like it is a silver bullet to answered prayer. However, we can pray with confidence trusting that prayers that are prayed according to the will of God are answered.

Here is a great promise for us found in **1 John 5:14-15**,

¹⁴And this is the confidence that we have toward him, that if we ask anything according to his will he hears us. ¹⁵And if we know that he hears us in whatever we ask, we know that we have the requests that we have asked of him.

Think about the top two or three things that are most pressing on your heart and that you will devote time to in prayer during the 21 days. Write those down in the space below. Be open as you pray to hearing what God wants to show you in those areas.

During the fast I am praying and believing God for:

What is Fasting?

Fasting is a spiritual discipline that involves giving up an appetite and setting aside specific time to pray and study the Word of God. What you abstain from during this time is not as important as what you do with your time. You can fast certain foods, entertainment, social media or other things that are part of your daily routine and then dedicate time to seeking the Lord.

Fasting is found in both the Old and New Testament. Moses fasted at least two recorded 40 day periods. Jesus fasted for 40 days and spoke about fasting with his disciples. Fasting is a way of humbling yourself before God, denying yourself of certain appetites, in the pursuit of drawing closer to God. Fasting enables the Holy Spirit to reveal things to us about our condition that will lead us to brokenness, repentance and a transformed life.

Fasting is a statement that is like saying to God, *"you are more important to me than food, you are what I desire, you are what I hunger for."* Fasting also has a way of exposing what are really the idols of our heart and affording us the opportunity to see ourselves in light of the gospel and repent.

What are the different kinds of fasts?

As you prepare to fast, it is important to choose a fasting plan that works for you. While this section will provide some general information about different types of fasts, as well as, some suggestions on how to create your own fasting plan, it is important to mention that there is nothing more inherently spiritual about one type of fast as opposed to another. These are simply guidelines to assist you.

Do not let what you eat or what you don't eat become the focus of your fast. Keep the main thing before you, drawing closer to God. This is a time to disconnect enough from your regular patterns and habits in order to connect more closely with God.

SPECIFIC FOOD OR ACTIVITY FAST

In this type of fast, you omit a specific item from your meal plan. For example, you may choose to eliminate meats, processed or fast foods, or sweets. Most people can incorporate this type of fast relatively easily. It can also prove to be a great solution for people with specific dietary needs or medical conditions that may cause certain limitations.

Some may also find it extremely beneficial to fast from a regular activity or habit. This may include such things as Television, social media (Facebook/Instagram/Twitter) or Internet surfing.

Prayer and fasting are not just about connecting with God but also about disconnecting from the world. Try to tune out some of the regular distractions from your day as much as possible. Replace that time with things that will nourish you spiritually.

DANIEL FAST

The Daniel Fast is an extremely effective fast for spiritual focus, bodily discipline and purification of the body and soul. It comes from two different times in the book of Daniel, where he fasted and ate only vegetables and drank water.

The foundation of the Daniel Fast is fruits and vegetables. There is room for broad interpretation as some choose to include starchy vegetables and dairy, but that depends on the individual. Your goal should be to seek God in prayer and follow what the Holy Spirit leads you to do.

* For some great recipes and food guidelines for a Daniel Fast visit www.ultimatedanielfast.com

JUICE FAST

A juice fast consists of simply consuming fruit and vegetable juices and water instead of solid food. Some include whey protein in their liquid plan as well. Even if you choose not to make your entire fast liquids only, substituting one or two meals for liquids is a great alternative.

WATER FAST

A water only fast is what is commonly referred to in the Bible when it speaks of someone fasting. This is how Jesus fasted and the New Testament church fasted. A water fast is just that—no eating of any food or drinking of any liquids except water.

Periodic water fasts can be very beneficial but extreme precautions should be taken. For some people it is hard to perform effectively at their jobs and have energy for their families while drinking water. We recommend consulting your physician first and water fasting for only a day or two unless you can get away to really disconnect so you can give your best energy to fasting and prayer.

DURATION OF FAST

You may choose to fast all twenty one days or you may choose to fast several days out of the week. This is your personal decision and should be prayerfully considered as it applies to your circumstances. Fasting is not a legalistic discipline, we have freedom in Christ and we should exercise that freedom when it comes to fasting. Fast as you are *led by the Spirit to do so*.

How do I prepare to fast?

1. START WHERE YOU ARE

We are all at different places in our walk with God. Likewise our jobs, daily schedules, and health conditions are all different and place various demands on our energy. So most importantly, whether you've fasted before or this is your first time, start where you are. Your personal fast should present a level of challenge to you, but it's important to know your own body, know your options, and most importantly, seek God in prayer and follow what the Holy Spirit leads you to do.

2. CHOOSE YOUR TYPE OF FAST

While preparing for your fast, it is important to choose ahead of time what type of fast, or what combination, you will pursue. Not only will this help with making necessary preparations to implement your plan, but as you commit to a specific fast ahead of

time and know how you're going to do it, you will position yourself to finish strong.

If giving up food will be problematic for you, then consider fasting television, social media or some other activity. There are many distractions and things that we do that could be set aside from our daily routine during a fast.

Remember, you are covered by God's grace. Trust that He will show you what to do.

3. FIND YOUR FASTING SWEET SPOT

When most people start fasting, they will experience some level of discomfort. However, it is possible to get used to the fasting routine quickly. You must learn to fast in a way that works for you.

While any true fast does involve abstinence from food or at least certain types of food, different fasting combinations work better for different people. The goal to having a successful fast is getting to the place where you feel light and spiritually in tune. Your mind is easily focused on God and spiritual things. You have an increased spiritual energy. You can feel the fast working—that's your fasting sweet spot! Just like runners know what their target heart rate is to see the benefits of their physical training, you can experience something similar with fasting in a spiritual sense.

If you are on a Daniel Fast you might ask questions like, "*Should I eat beans or eggs?*" If you can eat beans and eggs and stay in your fasting sweet spot, go ahead. But for some people, eating those things takes them out of the sweet spot. Should you eat peanut butter? Probably not, that's more of an indulgence. Not many people can stay in their fasting sweet spot while enjoying indulgences.

Should you completely cut out caffeine? It depends. If you can stay in your fasting sweet spot with a little caffeine, great. If you are going on a longer fast and want to cut it out of your diet completely, that's great too. But ease yourself off and make it your goal to be completely caffeine free about two-thirds of the way into your fast.

If you drink coffee regularly, one of the worst mistakes you can make is to fast for one to three days and cut caffeine out abruptly. Please don't do this or you will spend this time with a grumpy attitude and in withdrawal with low-grade headaches instead of enjoying God's presence.

Mixing things up for a bit during a twenty-one day fast is what typically works for people.

4. BEGIN AND END THE FAST WELL

Depending on the fast you choose, it is very important to prepare your body before beginning the fast. Take a few days to transition into your fast; otherwise you could experience some physical illness. If you are going on a Daniel Fast, start eliminating meat, whole grains, and refined sugars from your diet the week before. Also, start cutting back on your dairy and caffeine intake.

The same principle applies to ending your fast. When your fast is over, add foods back gradually. Don't break your fast with greasy fast food. Your body has experienced detoxification and you will most likely get sick if you binge on certain foods after an extended fast.

Fasting requires reasonable precautions. If you have any health concerns, please consult your physician prior to beginning your fast, especially if you are taking any medication, have a chronic condition, or are pregnant or nursing a baby.

PRAYER POINTS

MONDAY | JANUARY 22

As you begin fasting, pray that you would have an increasing desire to grow closer to God, His Word, His righteousness, and His will. Matthew 5:6

TUESDAY | JANUARY 23

Pray that we will be bold and faithful in this season of prayer and that God will make of us praying disciples of Jesus. Joel 1:13-14; 2:12-18

WEDNESDAY | JANUARY 24

Focus on personal repentance from sin and turning to holiness in Christ. Pray for churchwide repentance of sin and that God's righteousness would be a safeguard for our church. Isaiah 58; Psalm 51

THURSDAY | JANUARY 25

Pray that we would grow in godly character, lay aside ungodly habits, and become spiritually mature; for sexual purity among pastors, leaders and Christians, and to guard against perversion, immorality, sexual strongholds, and broken marriages. Matthew 6:16-18; Ephesians 4:14-32

FRIDAY | JANUARY 26

Pray for the church community: that there would be a growing desire among Christ followers and within the church for unity in relationships and "building one another up in love." 1 Corinthians 12; Romans 12:3-21

SATURDAY | JANUARY 27

Pray for the heart of worship personally and corporately as a church; that we would desire to please God and fear God. Psalm 95 and 150

SUNDAY | JANUARY 28

Pray that as disciples we would grow in maturity, serve faithfully and give obediently and generously to God through the church; that there will be an abundance to advance the cause of Christ. 2 Corinthians 9:12-14

MONDAY | JANUARY 29

Pray for unity and harmony of the church, for our church and area churches to be unified in our purpose to make disciples. Ephesians 4:1-3

TUESDAY | JANUARY 30

Pray for the purpose and vision of the church of making disciples who make disciples and planting churches in our region. Pray for your part in helping to fulfill that vision. Ephesians 4:15-16

WEDNESDAY | JANUARY 31

Pray for your Elders and leaders that they would be filled with God's wisdom and direction for the church; that they would have bold vision and strategy to advance God's Kingdom. Hebrews 13:7

THURSDAY | FEBRUARY 1

Pray against division, strife, and false doctrine. The potential for division and disruption is high. Pray for the protection of our church family. Romans 15:5-6

FRIDAY | FEBRUARY 2

Pray for marriages and families in the body of Christ. The health of the church is defined by the health of the family. Pray for the strengthening of marriages at Sent Church and that our families would glorify God and be examples of the power of the gospel. Ephesians 6:18

SATURDAY | FEBRUARY 3

Pray that there would be an increase of both unchurched and de-churched people (the lost) turning to Christ. Pray that God would make you a disciple-making follower of Jesus. Matthew 28:18-20; 1 Timothy 2:3-4

SUNDAY | FEBRUARY 4

Pray for missionaries around the world and the spread of the gospel globally. Pray for the Acts29 Network and their church planting efforts around the world.

MONDAY | FEBRUARY 5

Pray that God would call many people into lay and vocational ministry as small group leaders, lay pastors, church planters, elders, and missionaries. Romans 10:14-15

TUESDAY | FEBRUARY 6

Pray for the thousands of children in the foster care system in our region. Pray that the church would respond to the orphan care crisis and work on behalf of the children; that many families would open their hearts and homes to care for orphans through adoption and foster care. Psalm 83:3; James 1:27

WEDNESDAY | FEBRUARY 7

Pray for God's spirit to guard our leadership's character against temptation, discouragement and the attacks of the enemy. Pray for the marriages and children of each pastor and ministry leader.

THURSDAY | FEBRUARY 8

Pray for family members by name that are far from Christ. Pray for their salvation, pray for their hearts to be softened to the gospel message and opportunities for you to proclaim the gospel to them.

FRIDAY | FEBRUARY 9

Pray for leaders to have wisdom in decision making as they lead the church and their specific area of ministry.

SATURDAY | FEBRUARY 10

Pray for Sanford and the welfare of our city. For peace and harmony within its borders. Pray for our mayor, city commissioners, law enforcement, community leaders--that righteousness and justice would prevail in our community. 1 Timothy 2:2

SUNDAY | FEBRUARY 11

Pray that Sanford would experience an unprecedented revival as people turn to salvation in Christ alone. Pray for your neighbors specifically, for their openness to the gospel and for their salvation. Pray for an unprecedented harvest of souls for Christ in our region! Psalm 85:6

THE PRAYER OF A
RIGHTEOUS PERSON
HAS GREAT POWER
AS IT IS WORKING.

—JAMES 5:16—

“Jesus takes it for granted that his disciples will observe the pious custom of fasting. Strict exercise of self-control is an essential feature of the Christian’s life. Such customs have only one purpose—to make the disciples more ready and cheerful to accomplish those things which God would have done.”

—Dietrich Bonhoeffer, *The Cost of Discipleship*

“Fasting with a pure heart and motives, I have discovered, brings personal revival and adds power to our prayers. Personal revival occurs because fasting is an act of humility. Fasting gives opportunity for deeper humility as we recognize our sins, repent, receive God’s forgiveness, and experience His cleansing of our soul and spirit. Fasting also demonstrates our love for God and our full confidence in His faithfulness.

—Bill Bright, *The Coming Revival*



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