

PRAAYER & FASTING

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*The fear of the Lord is the beginning of wisdom,
and knowledge of the Holy One is understanding.*

Proverbs 9:10



What is fasting?

This year, we, as OpenChurch, invite you to join us on a seven-day prayer and fasting journey. We will together seek God for this New Year and the exciting season that is in front of us. Our prayer for you is that you will experience God in a new and refreshing way.

The idea of voluntary sacrifice is rare and has been lost in our culture of entertainment, gratification and pleasure. We think fasting is for the radical, extremist or religious saint. But it is for ordinary individuals who realize their lack and have a desperate need and longing for more of God. A FASTED LIFESTYLE IS NORMAL CHRISTIANITY

There is no such thing as New Testament Christianity without regular Fasting. Fasting by definition is abstaining from food. However what we are after goes way beyond denying ourselves physical nourishment. Our desire is to position our hearts to encounter Jesus



Different ways to fast

It is best to fast when you do not have much strenuous work, but if this is not possible you can combine it but keep in mind that the more time we have to pray the more effective our fast. If you are not used to fasting, it is good to take a few days to prepare yourself. E.g. stop coffee, coke and only vegetables and fruit the last couple of days. – Remember: The greater the sacrifice the greater the reward!

Liquid fast

Going without solid foods and drink only light liquids such as fruit juices (not milkshakes, sodas, caffeine or energy drinks)

Regular fast

Drinking only water or liquids that have no calories. Common lengths for this fast are one day, three days or one week. It is occasionally longer, sometimes 21 days or forty days.

Partial fast

Sometimes called a Daniel fast, we abstain from tasty foods and eat certain things like vegetables and nuts. John Wesley often fasted on just bread and water. Media fast is abstaining from social media, TV, films

Absolute fast

Sometimes called an Ester fast is abstaining from all food and water. This fast lasts from one to three days.

Benedict fast

Established by Saint Benedict of Nursia Italy (525 AD) only one meal per day. Many monks in the monasteries in Europe lived in this way for years and had strong bodies and even stronger spirits.



More on fasting

Fasting is more than denying ourselves food. It isn't really about being hungry, although we do get hungry when we fast; fasting is about experiencing more of God. When we are physically weak from not eating we are more sensitive to God.

Fasting is an opportunity to SET aside time individually and corporately to PRAY more, to read the BIBLE, to WORSHIP, and surrender our lives to God.

Fasting is the road to revelation and encounter that we cannot receive any other way, it greatly increases our receptivity to the Lord's voice and His word.

Fasting is not a way to manipulate God or get His attention or earn his favor. Eastern religion practice fasting that is preoccupied with self, we fast to strengthen us in our quest to be preoccupied with God and His will.

Whether you're fasting for the first time or you're a regular faster, we encourage you to challenge yourself to go deeper in this discipline of fasting.

Foods to avoid in a Daniel fast:

Animal products: all meat, milk products, fish and eggs

Added Sugar: honey, sweeteners, brown sugar, syrup and all types of sugar. Processed wheat, all white flour products and white rice

Processed Foods: food with artificial additives, chemicals and preservatives

Fried Foods: chips (baked is permitted)

Fats: butter, margarine, animal fat etc

Chocolate: dark, milk and white chocolate, chocolate sauce and cocoa

Drinks with caffeine and alcohol: alcohol, coffee, tea with caffeine, sodas and energy drinks.

What is prayer?

Prayer is a dialog, talking with God, where we invite Him into our daily lives and give Him room to share His thoughts with us. Prayer flows from a place of assurance that God is the Creator who has the big picture. He also has the power to help us in life. In prayer there is both a place to express our trust in God and also to express our insecurities about life's challenges.



Do not be anxious about anything, but in every situation, by prayer and petition, with thanksgiving, present your requests to God.

Philippians 4:6

ACTS

A prayer model

Adoration

Adoration is praise and worship. Adoration of God as our Lord means that we give Him our hearts in affectionate devotion and honour Him for His awesome power, wisdom, strength, goodness, mercy and love.

For I am convinced that neither death nor life, neither angels nor demons, neither the present nor the future, nor any powers, neither height nor depth, nor anything else in all creation, will be able to separate us from the love of God that is in Christ Jesus our Lord. - Romans 8:38-39

Scriptures to meditate on:

Deut 10:20-12
Deut 32:4
2 Sam 7:22
1 Chron 16:23-25
Neh 9:5-6
Psalms 7:18
Psalms 9:2-3
Psalms 57:10-12
Psalms 63:2-8
Psalms 66:1-4
Psalms 71:14-24
Psalms 146:1-6

Pray this prayer:

You are a loving God. You are always by my side. Regardless of where I go, you are always waiting to reveal yourself to me.

Confession

Confession is asking forgiveness and turning away from your sinful ways. God is faithful and righteous to forgive your sins. Through confession and repentance we become more like Jesus. When you confess your sin in a specific area, then pray for God to transform you to the opposite (e.g. pray for joy instead of depression)

"Don't copy the behavior 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

Pray this prayer:

God, help me to renew my mind and may you change my desires so they become what you desire.

Scriptures to meditate on:

2 Sam 24:10
Psalms 25:6-7
Psalms 32:3-5
Psalms 38:18-19
Psalms 51:3-12
Psalms 103:8-14
Psalms 130:1-4
Jonah 2:1-10

Thanksgiving

Thank God for all He has already done in your life and meditate on the many blessing you have in your life. Thank Him for His faithfulness in keeping His promises to you, your family, and your friends regardless of the circumstances. *"You are my God, and I will praise you; you are my God, and I will exalt you. Give thanks to the Lord, for he is good; his love endures forever." - Psalms 118:28-29*

Pray this prayer:

Thank you God for your faithfulness in keeping your promises to me. Thank you for all the blessings you have shared with me.

Scriptures to meditate on:

2 Sam 22:48-50
1 Chron 16:8-12
1 Chron 16:23-26
Psalms 23:6
Psalms 50:14
Psalms 50:23

Supplication

Pray that God will give you your heart's desires and that His will may come to pass in your life. Pray that it may be your heart's desire to follow His Word and His counsel.

"Let us then approach God's throne of grace with confidence, so that we may receive mercy and find grace to help us in our time of need."
- Hebrews 4:16

Pray this prayer:

I give you my will that it may be in line with yours God. Give me your heart's desires, so that they may bring about your purpose for my life.

Scriptures to meditate on:

1 Chron 4:10
2 Chron 20:9
Psalms 18:16-19
Psalms 62:7-8
Psalms 116:1-7
Psalms 119:169-170
Psalms 142
Psalms 143:7-12
Matt 6:9-14
Rom 15:30
Eph 3:14-21
Phil 4:6-7

S.O.A.P.

How to use!

We use the SOAP method as a guide to our bible reading and journaling every day.

You will need a bible, a pen and a book to write in.





Scripture

Open your bible at your reading for the day. Take time to read and pray that God will speak to you. When you are done, look for which particular verse spoke to you specially and note it down in your journal.

Observation

What is God saying to you through this scripture? Ask the Holy Spirit to reveal Himself to you.



Application

Do what you have read and think about how you can apply it in your personal life. Maybe it is advice, encouragement, a new promise or a correction in a specific area of your life. Write down how you can apply this scripture in your life today.

Prayer

It can be as simple as asking God to help you to put the scripture into practise, or prayer a prayer for greater insight into what He wants to reveal to you. Remember prayer is a conversation, so make sure you listen to what God has to say and remember to write it down.



Do you invite God into your daily decision making?

We are now going into a week of fasting together. Fasting is about saying NO to something in order to say YES to something else. It is a time to have fellowship with Him, who is our first love. As we read the daily verse and meditate on it today, we also need to be aware during this season, of the need to lay aside some things in order to draw closer to Jesus, who loved us first.

We love because he first loved us. 1 John 4:19

The Greek word for "love" which is found in this scripture is 'agapao', which means: to do the right thing at the right time for the right reason, in other words, to love someone as a friend. So we love Jesus because he first loved us. You can make a decision to welcome Jesus into every part of your life. Choose today to welcome Christ into all areas of your heart. Choose to humble yourself and surrender every area of your life to Him.

He can be Lord both in the storm and the tranquil times, but do you allow Him to be?

Whom do you love more than God? What do you love more than God? What do you invite into your heart? Do you spend more time focusing on your career, than you do on worshipping God? Do you worship your work more than you honour God? Do you trust in people more than you trust in God? Do you allow the ways of this world to have more influence over you than God's ways?

God loves you the way you are. Actually He loves every part of you. He created you. He formed every detail of your makeup. He created all aspects of your personality. He created all aspects of your heart. He created every fibre of your soul. Choose today to love Jesus. Choose to place Jesus as your first priority in every season of your life.

Let Christ lead you in your studies. Let Christ lead you in your career. Let Christ lead you in your business. Let Christ lead you in your ministry. Let Christ lead you in your home. Let Christ lead your family. Let Christ lead every aspect of your Life. He is intimately acquainted with every detail of your life, and He loves you deeply. There are no words that can adequately describe how much God loves you.

Today's thought:

Choose to love God, because He loved you first.

Today's prayer:

Pray for God's blessing and anointing over this time, we as a Church are venturing into together.

Pray that the things we set aside may create more room for Him in our lives.

Pray that He may come in and take control in the areas, where until now, we haven't given him Lordship.

Whether it is light or dark, give it to Him.

Thank Him that He is with us in all we do.

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New horizons

Abraham had just parted company with his nephew Lot, after advising him to choose the land he wanted to settle in with his growing family. Lot chose the best, the only fruitful land to be seen – the whole plain of the Jordan.

Now Abraham remained with the leftovers, the dry and rocky desert land. Right there God speaks to him and asks him what he can see from where he stood, - not much, Abraham probably thought. But God was not finished, he said: all that you see, from where you stand, I give to you.

I imagine Abraham's faith in that moment was awakened, that he suddenly was able to see what others couldn't see. I believe he saw water pouring out from springs, watering the earth. I believe he saw his servants and descendants in the following generations, tilling the land and making it productive. God gave him new vision and let him see new horizons.

Abraham's reaction was to worship God. He built an altar! This is the right reaction to every challenge in life, to lift our eyes and see what God sees and then thank Him for that reality.

Today's thought:

Not everything is as it looks. God wants you to lift your eyes and your focus, so you see His perspective, opportunities and new horizons.

Today's prayer:

Pray today for eyes to see what God sees when he looks at you, your family, our Church and those who cross your path. Pray for faith to trust in God, when the circumstances look unfavourable.

Genesis 13:14-18

The Lord said to Abram after Lot had parted from him, "Look around from where you are, to the north and south, to the east and west. All the land that you see I will give to you and your offspring forever. I will make your offspring like the dust of the earth, so that if anyone could count the dust, then your offspring could be counted. Go, walk through the length and breadth of the land, for I am giving it to you."

So Abram went to live near the great trees of Mamre at Hebron, where he pitched his tents. There he built an altar to the Lord.

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Can you see it?

Have you ever been asked the question: Do you see? You just know that you ought to, but you just can't. Is it a new hairdo? New shoes? Has the person got new glasses? It's even worse if the person points in a certain direction while asking the question; do you see? You stare, you focus, you squint your eyes together, but you're still clueless. You can't see what the other person wants you to see. Does that mean that what you can't see doesn't exist?

When the explorers sailed the seas and discovered the world, there were a lot of important duties on board, and one of these was a pair of good eyes. In the lookout mast, the guy with the best eyes, scanned the horizons. There was lots of activity and life on the deck, but up there high above everyone, somebody sat, with his eyes glued to the horizon, where the sky and water seemed to meet. LAND AHEAD! The words alert everyone on board. All the sailors race to the railing. Some can see it, others can't, but everyone trusts the good pair of eyes, who has seen something out there, slowly but surely, it gets clearer and clearer on the horizon. Just because everyone can't see it, doesn't mean it isn't there.

1 Kings 18:41-46 we read about the prophet Elijah, his servant and King Ahab. In the previous verses we read about the dramatic power struggle on Mount Carmel. After the showdown, Elijah tells the King that now was a good moment to eat and drink. The King does as he was advised, but Elijah himself goes up on the mountaintop with his servant. The servant is told to look out towards the sea, and he reports back time and again that there is nothing to be seen on the horizon. Look again, is the response of the prophet. And then suddenly the servant sees a small cloud the size of a man's hand. Now the servant can see what Elijah could see all along. There is something on the horizon, the rain is on its way. Elijah sends the servant with the order to go and tell the king to hitch up his chariot, because the rain is on its way.

Can you see it? Sometimes I can, but sometimes I can't. Does that mean then that it is not on its way? No. Maybe one of those around me can see it. King Ahab couldn't see the rain, but he believed what Elijah said and Elijah trusted in God. This is my encouragement to you: Trust in God – even when you can't see it, He sees.

Today's thought:

Remember that just because you don't see it, doesn't mean it's not there.

Today's prayer:

Pray for God to give you eyes to see what He sees.

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Believing while you are waiting

"Let them sacrifice thank offerings and tell of his works with songs of joy." (Psalms 107:22) NIV

The word "thank offerings" come from the Hebrew word Towdah which speaks of sacrificial praise. It's the kind of praise that responds to God in faith without having seen the results, sacrificing our human visibilities and logic in favour of God's Word. Are you believing God for something that has not yet materialised? It can be hard to give thanks in the midst of the trial but it honours God and keeps our focus on Him and not our circumstances. Towdah is a lifestyle of faith expressed through praise that paves a way for God's miracle working power!

Today's thought:

How can you offer towdah praise to God in your season of waiting?

Today's prayer:

Take time today to offer thanksgiving to God for the breakthroughs you are believing Him for.

Honour Him through your praise as you focus on Him instead of worrying about the situation.

Let's also take time to pray for God's purposes in our Church to be accomplished in 2022. That this year will be a year of breakthroughs for His Kingdom and His glory.

Hebrews 13:15

"Therefore, let us offer through Jesus a continual sacrifice of praise to God, proclaiming our allegiance to his name."

Romans 8:28

"He is worthy of all our praise! Let's lift up His Name and trust Him to work all things together for our good!"

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Lift one another up

When the Israelites went from being hunters and gatherers to becoming farmers in the 'promised land' it was a huge culture shift. It was there entire civilisation which changed completely in a couple of years. Suddenly they now had their own place. Every tribe got their own territory and inheritance. It was almost too good to be true! What they had prayed for generations, over 430 years, now had become reality. When you reach this kind of milestone, you would naturally take it easy and celebrate the newly built veranda with a few friends and a good drink. Such a sunset they were not used to.

Joshua reminded the first 3 tribes not to relax before their sibling tribes also experienced the same joy. Because in this culture, that they were building together, they were connected to each other despite have different inheritance lots.

Not only were they to help each other, but those who were celebrating their victory and were already settling down to enjoy life, were challenged by Joshua to go ahead of those who had not yet found 'their home.' It brings to memory what Paul said to the Galatians "Carry each other's burdens, and in this way you will fulfill the law of Christ." (Galatians 6:2)

Today's thought:

Some of your battles and victories can be your preparation to help another. Whom could that be in your Church family and in your world?

Today's prayer:

Father thank you for all you have given me, all the times you have protected me from evil and led me on the right path. Open my eyes to see, what you have prepared for me, and how you have called me despite my own wounds and scars. Open my heart to embrace others and not just myself and my own needs. Lead me in this season to people who need what you have entrusted me with. Amen.

Joshua 1:14-15

"Your wives, your children and your livestock may stay in the land that Moses gave you east of the Jordan, but all your fighting men, ready for battle, must cross over ahead of your fellow Israelites. You are to help them until the Lord gives them rest, as he has done for you, and until they too have taken possession of the land the Lord your God is giving them. After that, you may go back and occupy your own land, which Moses the servant of the Lord gave you east of the Jordan toward the sunrise."

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Don't lose hope while you are waiting

New Horizons indicate that there is something new in the distance that is coming. It's something where we don't yet see the full picture, and when we do begin to see it, it will be a progressive experience. It can be a hard place to be in for the modern man, as we are used to wanting everything we see immediately.

We want the whole package at once. Nothing like collecting one plate at a time. No, we want the whole 12 plate set at once. If we are buying a new house, every room should be fully furnished and ready to use from day one.

In such a culture and mind-set it can be a huge challenge to be in such dangerous waters where things just happen step by step. Paul says in 1 Cor 13:9-10 "For we know in part and we prophesy in part, but when completeness comes, what is in part disappears."

This means that as long as we are on this side of eternity, all that we do and all that God has for us will come bit by bit along the way. God asked Abraham once to go up on a mountain top and said to him "Everything you see I will give to you and your descendants". When we read this today we know that it took a long time before this promise became reality. We also know that there was need for a whole lot more than one pair of eyes that saw what God had promised. There were 100,000 feet before the new horizon became a reality.

Galatians 6:9 says "Let us not become weary in doing good, for at the proper time we will reap a harvest if we do not give up."

I think we sometimes miss out on the new that is coming, is it because we forget to calculate that it takes time and that the experience is progressive?

Today's thought:

Just because it takes time and doesn't happen at once, it doesn't mean that God is not with us.

Today's prayer:

Let's pray for God to open our eyes, so we see new horizons

Let us pray that God will help us so we don't get tired in the waiting period, but maintain a fresh vision focused on the new horizon

Let's pray that God may give us wisdom to take every step towards the goal.

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The Harvest

The principle is, regardless of what you sow, you will reap in life.

This principle applies not only to your finances and investments, but also your relationships, your time, in what you say, with your accomplishments and talents, in the way you use your energy and all other areas. There are natural laws about sowing and reaping in God's Word.

Everything in life starts as a seed. Every idea is a seed. Every dream is a seed. Every action is a seed. Every building that has been built, was first a seed thought. Your life began like a seed. Everything on this planet starts as a seed.

God created the world around this seed principle. In the very first chapter of the Bible God mentions it. Genesis 1:11 Then God said, "Let the land produce vegetation: seed-bearing plants and trees on the land that bear fruit with seed in it, according to their various kinds." And it was so.

Today's thought:

Everything in this world we know starts with a seed. What seeds are you planting in your life and other people's lives today?

Today's prayer:

Pray for God's wisdom to sow the right seed today.

Galatians 6:9

"Let us not become weary in doing good, for at the proper time we will reap a harvest if we do not give up."

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