

Preparing For Your Fast

Sunday, March 27, 2011

We are excited to begin this four-week fast as a church to prepare for Easter on April 24! (If you missed March 20's sermon on "Invisible Fasting," please take some time to listen to it online for an overview of Biblical fasting at www.edgewaterchurch.org.)

Here's how it works: Pick one day a week for the next four weeks to fast. Choose what type of fast to take: it can be a total food fast, or a Daniel fast (fruits and vegetables), or some of other fast of your choice. The main goal is to go without something that you rely on so that you can connect with God better and have clearer focus. For more resources on fasting, see

http://www.awake21.org/images/uploads/resources/Prayer_Fasting_Personal_Devotion_Guide.pdf

Our theme for this fast is "*Internally strong, Externally focused.*"

Internally strong

Matthew 7:7-8 "Ask and it will be given to you; seek and you will find; knock and the door will be opened to you. For everyone who asks receives; he who seeks finds; and to him who knocks, the door will be opened."

What area in your life do you want to pray for during this fast? Examples may be a need for guidance, empowering, or personal devotion to God. We recommended focusing on one area so you can ask God consistently for it during this season. Write down your personal prayer focus here:

Externally focused

Who are the people who you would want to give their lives to Jesus? In the space below, write down the names of 10 people to be praying for.

Colossians 4:2-6 - ²Devote yourselves to prayer, being watchful and thankful. ³And pray for us, too, that God may open a door for our message, so that we may proclaim the mystery of Christ, for which I am in chains. ⁴Pray that I may proclaim it clearly, as I should. ⁵Be wise in the way you act toward outsiders; make the most of every opportunity. ⁶Let your conversation be always full of grace, seasoned with salt, so that you may know how to answer everyone.

Using **Colossians 4:2-6** as a guide during your fast, pray that...

- God would open a door for you to share with them about Jesus
- That you would share about Jesus clearly
- That you would be wise and make the most of every opportunity
- That your conversation would be full of grace
- That they would become Christians
- That they would respond to a church invitation for Easter
- That you would be able to follow up with those who attend church on Easter

Attached you will find four devotionals, one for each week of the fast. May you draw near to God during this season.

Week 1: Tune In

John 10:27

“My sheep hear My voice, and I know them, and they follow Me.” Have you ever been searching for a radio station only to be frustrated by finding static rather than music? You then focus to fine tune the dial again, and suddenly you hear a clear signal. The fact is, the signal always existed on the airwaves; the only difference is that now you have adjusted your tuner to the right frequency.

In our hectic lives, there are so many signals bombarding our senses that it can become difficult to distinguish God’s voice from the deafening “static noise” of life. Fasting enables us to tune out the world’s distractions and tune in to God. As we fast, we deny our flesh. When we deny our flesh, we become more in tune to the Holy Spirit and can hear God’s voice more clearly. If you truly listen for God’s voice, you will hear it. When you hear it, it will build faith within you.

If you desire to tune out the static of life and really tune into the voice of God, come to Him first and foremost with ears that are willing to listen and a heart that is ready to obey what he says. (Psalm 34:18, Isaiah 66:2) The more we practice being in His presence, the clearer and more recognizable His voice becomes.

In this time of fasting, what is your mind tuned to? What distractions do you need to remove so that you can focus on God? Prepare your heart to hear the voice of God, and ask God to help you remove distractions that keep you from focusing on Him and hearing Him clearly.

By Stovall Weems
Lead Pastor
Celebration Church

Week 2: Fervent Prayer

James 5:16b

The effective, fervent prayer of a righteous man avails much.

Fervency speaks of our level of intensity, passion and persistence. Many times, we can lose our passion in prayer or stop praying for certain things altogether because we lose heart or give up. But God invites us to keep them before Him and trust Him for an answer in His time. (Matthew 7:7-11)

The Old Testament prophet, Elijah, practiced a lifestyle of fervent, intense prayer and he witnessed incredible miracles in his lifetime as a result. In 1 Kings 17:17-24, we read of a woman whose only son became ill and died. When Elijah heard the news he quickly took action and did what he knew best – he fervently cried out to God. Elijah fully believed that God could bring the boy back to life, and he didn’t pray just once. It is recorded that he prayed three times for the boy’s soul to return to him. He prayed fervently, repeatedly and he wasn’t going to give up. Verse 22 reads, “then the Lord heard the voice of Elijah; and the soul of the child came back to him, and he revived.”

Elijah’s prayer was answered through his persistence and fervency. God hears your prayers as well and will bring an answer in His perfect timing. But don’t be discouraged or disheartened if the answer is not exactly what you expected. Commit to praying to God with passion and persistence, trusting the answer will come in God’s perfect way and in His perfect timing.

Continue to pray fervently for the main areas of concern in your life. Trust God to bring an answer as you journal your thoughts and inspirations through this time.

By Stovall Weems
Lead Pastor
Celebration Church

Week 3: Alignment with Heaven

Matthew 6:10 KJV

“Thy kingdom come, Thy will be done on earth, as it is in heaven.”

We have all heard the phrase, “just like heaven on earth.” When Jesus taught his disciples how to pray, in Matthew 6:9-13, He provided some insight into what “heaven on earth” might look like. In reality, heaven is a place where God’s will reigns supreme. If we want to have a taste of heaven on earth, then our prayer should be like Jesus’: “Thy kingdom come, Thy will be done...” The purest motivation for our prayers is that God will be glorified and that His will would reign supreme in our lives, just like it does in heaven.

On a more personal level, we can pray that His will be unhindered in our own lives. Rather than imposing His will upon us, God gives us the choice to surrender to it with trust and gladness. As we yield to the Lordship of Christ over every area of our lives, we come into agreement with Him. We experience alignment with heaven and position ourselves to taste a little bit of heaven here on earth. His will then becomes what we desire and the thing we most seek after. We enter into the incredible adventure of participating in God’s plan to move His kingdom forward on the earth. This is where we find the most fulfilling and joyous life, but it all starts with one, personal “yes, Lord” on our part.

What does God’s will “on earth as it is in heaven” look like in your life? Do the desires of your heart line up with the will of God? As we seek God together, let’s pray as Jesus taught us, “Thy kingdom come, Thy will be done.”

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Celebration Church

Week 4: What's Your Assignment?

Luke 4:1-2, 14-15 NIV

Jesus, full of the Holy Spirit, returned from the Jordan and was led by the Spirit in the desert, where for forty days He was tempted by the devil. He ate nothing during those days, and at the end of them He was hungry...Jesus returned to Galilee in the power of the Spirit, and news about Him spread through the whole countryside. He taught in their synagogues, and everyone praised Him.

Fasting and prayer are essential to receiving a clear vision of God’s specific path for our lives. Many times following a season of prayer and fasting we have a more defined understanding of the part that we play in the body of Christ and a greater sense of our particular spiritual giftings. (1 Corinthians 12)

This chapter in the Gospel of Luke describes the circumstances surrounding the beginning of Jesus’ public ministry. Notice that He went into the desert “full of the Holy Spirit.” However, He returned to Galilee, “in the power of the Holy Spirit.” Being full of the Spirit is knowing God and his character; walking in the power of the Spirit is when we know that we have the God-given strength and authority in our lives to walk out His will.

The power of the Spirit is essential for us to accomplish the assignment God has for our lives. God could be leading you to fast so that you can receive His specific instructions for your life. He will empower you, not just to know Him, but to walk in His power to accomplish what He has called you to do.

Are there areas of your life that need more clarity? Are you walking in the power of the Spirit and living in God’s purpose for your life? Write down those things God is speaking to you. As you conclude your fast, pray that God continually reveals His purpose and gives you ever increasing clarity and strength to walk it out.

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