



Dear Friends,

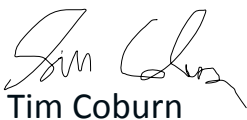
I hope you had an amazing time of celebration this Christmas and New Years! As we ring in 2015 my hope and prayer is that this year would be one of blessing and spiritual growth and renewal for you, your family, friends, neighborhood, community and our city. One of our values at Society Church is that we would be a people who "Grow in our passion for God".

My hope is that we will see and experience firsthand the promises of scripture found in 1 Chronicles 7:14 that says, *"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 will heal their land."* My hope for us as a community is that we would take some time to humble ourselves, to seek and pursue God in some new ways in this New Year. This is why we are starting this New Year with a new series called "First Love", its all about refocusing, recommitting and rediscovering the One who has First loved us. As Jesus instructed us in Matthew 6:33 "But seek FIRST his kingdom and his righteousness, and all these things will be given to you as well." As we start this New Year off, I want us to offer the first month to God as a symbolic act of putting him as the first pursuit of our lives.

You are invited to join us this January 2015 on this journey of rediscovering, refocusing and recommitting our lives to the One who has first loved us. Would you consider setting aside 21 days for fasting and prayer? In this scripture based devotional there are 21 days of devotions meant to guide and inspire you through this next 21 days. There is also some information about the purpose and practice of fasting. If you have any questions feel free to reach me through email at tim@societychurch.com. I am praying for you, our church and our city and am expecting God to accomplish great things both in us and through us in 2015.

I would like to leave with this prayer from the Apostle Paul. A prayer of hope, encouragement and faith from Ephesians 3:20-21- *"Now to Him who is able to do far more abundantly beyond all that we ask or think, according to the power that works within us, to Him be the glory in the church and in Christ Jesus to all generations forever and ever. Amen."*

In His Grip,


Tim Coburn

For more information visit: www.societychurch.com/first-love

The Purpose and Practice of Fasting

Purpose of Fasting - Purification of the body, mind will and emotions. Re-claiming control over our passions and desires of the flesh.

Scriptural Support for Fasting

Matthew 6:16- *"And when you fast, don't make it obvious, as the hypocrites do, for they try to look miserable and disheveled so people will admire them for their fasting. I tell you the truth, that is the only reward they will ever get."*

Mark 9: 14-29- *"When they came to the other disciples, they saw a large crowd around them and the teachers of the law arguing with them. 15As soon as all the people saw Jesus, they were overwhelmed with wonder and ran to greet him. 16"What are you arguing with them about?" he asked. 17A man in the crowd answered, "Teacher, I brought you my son, who is possessed by a spirit that has robbed him of speech. 18Whenever it seizes him, it throws him to the ground. He foams at the mouth, gnashes his teeth and becomes rigid. I asked your disciples to drive out the spirit, but they could not." 19"You unbelieving generation," Jesus replied, "how long shall I stay with you? How long shall I put up with you? Bring the boy to me." 20So they brought him. When the spirit saw Jesus, it immediately threw the boy into a convulsion. He fell to the ground and rolled around, foaming at the mouth. 21Jesus asked the boy's father, "How long has he been like this?" "From childhood," he answered. 22"It has often thrown him into fire or water to kill him. But if you can do anything, take pity on us and help us." 23" 'If you can'?" said Jesus. "Everything is possible for one who believes." 24Immediately the boy's father exclaimed, "I do believe; help me overcome my unbelief!" 25When Jesus saw that a crowd was running to the scene, he rebuked the impure spirit. "You deaf and mute spirit," he said, "I command you, come out of him and never enter him again." 26The spirit shrieked, convulsed him violently and came out. The boy looked so much like a corpse that many said, "He's dead." 27But Jesus took him by the hand and lifted him to his feet, and he stood up. 28After Jesus had gone indoors, his disciples asked him privately, "Why couldn't we drive it out?" 29He replied, "This kind can come out only by prayer & fasting"*

More than any other Discipline, fasting reveals the things that control us and others. Is there something that has control over you instead of you having control over it? It could be a substance, an identity, a relationship, an addiction, a job, any desire that is not self-controlled is controlling us. Spirit empowered self-control gives us authority to help ourselves and to help others find freedom through Christ.

The Practice of Fasting - In many ways the stomach is like a spoiled child, and a spoiled child does not need indulgence, but needs discipline.

Different Lengths of Fasting

1-5 day fast

Maybe you have never fasted before and are not sure about committing to 21 days. That is ok come up with something reasonable that you are willing to commit to and offer it to God as a loving act of worship.

21 day fast

This is from Daniel 10:2-3 that says- 2 In those days I, Daniel, was mourning three full weeks. 3 I ate no pleasant food, no meat or wine came into my mouth, nor did I anoint myself at all, till three whole weeks were fulfilled.

40 day fast

The most common fast in the Bible. Moses, David, Elijah, Ahab, Darius, Daniel, Esther, Ezra, Nehemiah, Jesus, John the Baptist, The Early Church, Apostle Paul all participated in lengthy spiritual fasting.

Different Kinds of Fasting:

Complete Fast

This fast calls for drinking only liquids, typically water with light juices as an option.

Selective Fast

This type of fast involves removing certain elements from a diet. One example of a selective fast is the Daniel Fast, during which you remove meat, sweets, or bread from your diet and consume water and juice for fluids and fruits and vegetables for food.

Partial Fast

This fast is sometimes called the Jewish Fast and involves abstaining from eating any types of food in the morning and afternoon. This can either correlate to specific times of the day, such as 6:00 am to 3:00 pm, or from sunup to sundown.

Media Fast

This fast is common for those who do not have much experience fasting foods, who have health issues that prevent the fasting of food, or who wish to refocus certain areas of their life that are out of balance. For instance, someone might select to abstain from using social media or watching television for the duration of the fast—and then choosing how to carefully bring that element back into their life in an orderly fashion.

Stages of Fasting:

The hunger pains are to be a reminder for us to re-orient our spirit and soul towards the Lord. To walk the path less traveled that his grace may be amply received for that time of need and for a future time of need.

DAYS 1-3- The first three days are usually, the most difficult in terms of physical discomfort and hunger pains. The body is beginning to rid itself of the toxins that have built up over years of poor eating habits, and it is not a comfortable process. This is the reason for the coating on the tongue and bad breath. Do not be disturbed by these symptoms; rather be grateful for the increased health and well-being that will result. You may experience headaches during this time,

DAYS 4-6- By the fourth day the hunger pains are beginning to subside though you will have feelings of weakness and occasional dizziness. The dizziness is only temporary and caused by sudden changes in position. Move more slowly and you will have no difficulty.

DAYS 6-21- By the sixth or seventh day you will begin to feel stronger and more alert. Hunger pains will continue to diminish until by the ninth or tenth day they are only a minor irritation. The body will have eliminated the bulk of toxins and you will feel good. Your sense of concentration will be sharpened and you will feel as if you could continue fasting indefinitely. Physically this is the most enjoyable part of the fast.

****** Cautions of Fasting ******

Some people who for physical reasons should not fast food: diabetics, expectant mothers, heart patients, those with current or past eating disorders and others. If you have any question about your fitness to fast, please seek medical advice from a doctor.

How to read & apply Scripture: SOAP Method

S – Scripture, take some time to get into the Word.

O – Observe, pick a specific verse or theme to focus on.

A – Application, figure out how that specific verse or theme applies to your life that day.

P – Prayer, take some time to seek God through meaningful conversation.

How to begin a daily prayer time:

Select a specific place and time. Schedule a meeting...

Mark 1:35- "Very early in the morning, while it was still dark, Jesus got up, left the house and went to a solitary place, where he prayed."

Follow a simple plan: How to spend fifteen minutes with God:

- Read a verse (4 minutes)
- Reflect on the verse (4 minutes)
- Record what God desires of you (3 minutes)
- Request from God (4 minutes)

Return To Me - Day 1

Joel 2:12 NIV

“Even now,” declares the Lord, “return to Me with all your heart, with fasting and weeping and mourning.

If one were to look at the kind of fasting that took place in the Old Testament, it would be easy to assume that the reason for fasting is to gain forgiveness. In the book of Joel, the Israelites had wandered far from God, and their sinfulness had resulted in famine and pestilence in the land. Through the prophet Joel, God called them to repentance, ordering them to declare a sacrificial fast that along with mourning and weeping, would show God the sincerity of their repentance. In return, the prophet said, perhaps God would, “turn and have pity and leave behind a blessing.”

Such a fast of repentance is seen under the Old Covenant time and again, because under the Old Covenant man had to rely on his works and sacrifices to avert the wrath of God. But under the New Covenant, we don't have to fast for forgiveness. Every wrong we have done and will do was forgiven at the cross, and when we accept Christ, we walk under a New Covenant of grace and forgiveness! We don't have to fast, weep and mourn to convince God of our sincere repentance or to avert His wrath. I Thessalonians 5:9 tells us that, “God did not appoint us to suffer wrath, but to receive salvation through our Lord Jesus Christ.” So then, why do we, as people under a New Covenant, need to set aside special times devoted to fasting and prayer?

As we walk with God, there are times that we feel far from Him or disconnected. Joel's words resonate with us who live in a context of grace – “return to me with all your heart.” There are times we realize that, though we have chosen to follow Jesus, the flame of our love for him has grown cold. It is during these times we can return to God with our whole heart, put aside the distractions of the world and focus solely on loving Him. Your time spent in prayer each day of the fast can result in a new richness, a rewarding connection with the Father. No matter where you are on your journey with Jesus, you can always take a step closer towards Him.

As we begin this time of prayer and fasting, let's turn our hearts toward God. Make a commitment to seek God daily. Pray that your love for Christ will be increased and your passion for Him will be reignited over the next 21 days.

Tune In - Day 2

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.

Fasting Removes Unbelief - Day 3

Matthew 17:18-21

18 And Jesus rebuked the demon, and it came out of him; and the child was cured from that very hour. 19 Then the disciples came to Jesus privately and said, "Why could we not cast it out?" 20 So Jesus said to them, "Because of your unbelief; for assuredly, I say to you, that if you have faith as a mustard seed, you will say to this mountain, "Move from here to there', and it will move; and nothing will be impossible for you. 21 However, this kind does not go out except by prayer and fasting."

When we pray and fast, we don't do so to change God or His will. By praying and fasting, we are the ones changed. Coming into alignment with God helps us curb our doubts and fears. When we pray and fast, the thing that leaves - - the thing that "goes out"-- is our unbelief. It is when we have faith to believe, that we can pray with confidence and know that "nothing will be impossible" as we live to bring glory to God.

Ask God to strengthen our hearts to fully believe Him and believe His word. It is okay to recognize and acknowledge if you struggle with unbelief. It's the first step in allowing God to strengthen your faith and bring you into alignment with His plan for your life.

What is it that you need faith to believe for?

Align yourself with God's Word and will during this fast. Release your unbelief. Pray with confidence, knowing "nothing will be impossible for you

Agreement With the Will of God - Day 4

Amos 3:3

"Can two walk together, unless they are agreed?"

In the heart of every believer is the desire to walk closely with God. We know that He too desires a close relationship with each one of us. A key to having a strong level of spiritual intimacy with God is living in agreement with His will for our lives.

In Genesis 5:22, we read of Enoch and see that his life modeled a long journey, walking consistently with God, for it says, "Enoch walked with God 300 years..." Enoch lived a powerful life. He was a man that walked in agreement with God's will and lived a life pleasing to God. (Hebrews 11:5b)

It is one thing to know God's will for our lives; it's another to live in agreement with His will. In order to enjoy the best life that God has for us, we must first understand that God does not change, but we sometimes must. Let's earnestly seek to know and agree with God's will for our lives. The level of our agreement with God will determine the degree of closeness in our walk with Him.

Pray today that we can walk in agreement with God and enjoy the life that He desires us to have in Christ.

When Grace Comes Down - Day 5

John 1:17 NIV

“For the law was given through Moses, but grace and truth came through Jesus Christ.”

Have you ever wondered what it would be like if you could see God for who He really is? What would He say about the state of humanity? About religion? About our own propensity toward sin? There is no need to wonder about what God is like because to know Him, we have only to look at Jesus. In Jesus we have received grace, but there is even something more that we have received. We have received truth.

The kind of truth John is talking about in this passage is not a list of laws and rules such as were given to Moses. Make no mistake; the revelation of God through the word of the law was glorious. When Moses came down from Mount Sinai after receiving the commandments, his face shone so brightly with the glory of God that he had to wear a veil. But the word of the law cannot compare with the word of life that has been revealed through Jesus Christ!

In John 1:18, we are told that no one – not even Moses – had ever seen God. But Jesus has not only seen God; He is God. The truth that John is speaking about is a clear and unveiled vision of the true nature of God. When we try to look at God through the lens of legalism and religion, it is like looking at Him through a veil. Only when we see Him through Jesus Christ can we truly get a glimpse into His heart. It is from a state of grace, not legalism, that we will find real and lasting transformation. (2 Corinthians 3:7-18)

Have you been looking at God through the veil of legalism and religion?

In Jesus, we see the full revelation of the nature of God – His love and holiness, mercy and justice, compassion and power all perfectly and beautifully expressed. Pray that the Holy Spirit will help you see God through the eyes of grace and truth given to us in Jesus Christ.

Reliance on God - Day 6

Romans 7:18-20 NLT

“And I know that nothing good lives in me, that is, in my sinful nature. I want to do what is right, but I can’t. I want to do what is good, but I don’t. I don’t want to do what is wrong, but I do it anyway. But if I do what I don’t want to do, I am not really the one doing wrong, it is sin living in me that does it.”

There’s an internal war that often wages within each and every one of us. Paul describes this so well here in Romans 7 – we desire to do the right thing, but in our own efforts, we don’t have the power to and we mess up.

The good news is that we don’t have to rely on our own strength to make right decisions. We don’t have to be dominated by our sinful nature and end up doing the things we don’t want to do. But the only way we can live this kind of life is by yielding to the Holy Spirit and relying on the strength of Jesus Christ, not our own.

When we’re facing struggles, we must rely on God’s power alive within us through the Holy Spirit. When we are born again, the Holy Spirit resides in us and places in us the desire to do what is pleasing to God. (Hebrews 10:16) The Holy Spirit always wants to do what is right. He always wants to uphold the perfect will of God, pleasing the Father in every way. It is our job to lay down our stubborn fleshly will and yield to the will of God. In that moment, the Holy Spirit will be there to help us in our time of need. Instead of trusting in our own strength, let’s learn to yield to and become totally reliant upon the Holy Spirit. Are there areas in your life causing an internal struggle?

Make a decision today that you will yield to the Holy Spirit and lean on His strength, not your own, to overcome obstacles of sin and selfishness in your life. Surrender and release those areas to God, knowing He will help you.

Fervent Prayer - Day 7

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.

As we close out this first week, 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.

Hear Him - Day 8

Matthew 17:5b, 8 NLT

5 "This is My dearly loved Son, who brings Me great joy, Listen to Him"....

8 And when they looked up, Moses and Elijah were gone, and they saw only Jesus.

On the Mount of Transfiguration three disciples had an experience that showed us the Father's plan for a New Covenant. Jesus took Peter, James and John up to the top of a mountain where He was transfigured into His glorified state. Up until this point, they related to God through the law (Moses), or through the prophets (Elijah). After the vision, Peter eagerly offered to erect three tabernacles – one for each. Then a loud voice from Heaven was heard saying, "This is my dearly loved Son, who brings me great joy. Listen to Him". When the disciples looked up, they saw only Jesus.

On the mountain, God made it clear that we would only discover His pleasure by following Jesus. God's grace is freely given to those who have received new life in Him. Sometimes though, there are areas of our lives where we do not fully embrace God's grace. There may be circumstances or areas where we still try to earn our way to the Father. You cannot earn God's pleasure, but you can walk in it as you follow Jesus Christ. As you seek God today, seek Him for a greater revelation of Jesus in your heart; for only then are you reminded that you are a beloved child of God. He finds pleasure in you.

How does understanding the New Covenant of grace change the focus of your faith? As you pray and seek after God, let His be the loudest voice you hear.

Clean House - Day 9

Romans 8:5-6

5 For those who live according to the flesh, set their minds on the things of the flesh, but those who live according to the Spirit, the things of the Spirit. 6 For to be carnally minded is death, but to be spiritually minded is life and peace.

Have you ever looked up at your ceiling fan blades or in the deep recesses of your couch cushions and noticed the filth that builds up over time? Even though we might clean on a regular basis, there are times when we need to go...a little deeper. We realize that what appeared to be clean on the surface was in all actuality, quite filthy.

The same thing can happen spiritually. As we go about our daily lives, there are things that can build up over time. Even if we regularly worship, pray and read our Bible, the different pressures and cares of this world can quietly build up, and end up consuming our lives. Without even realizing it, we can lose our peace, our joy, and our passion for the things of God. Our service to God, which used to fill us with life and excitement, becomes a duty that we must fulfill.

Fasting is the deep cleaning that helps us take our mind off of the things of this world and instead have a refreshed focus on the things of the Spirit. It is an incredibly effective way to get into the nooks and crannies of our soul and bring all those dusty old habits, broken mindsets and rusty attitudes out into the light of God's truth. In fasting and prayer, our service to God returns to something we want to do rather than something we have to do.

As you pray and fast today, ask God to show you any areas where you could use a refreshed spiritual focus. Like David, in Psalm 51:10-12, pray that God will cleanse your heart, renew your spirit, and restore the joy of your salvation. Pray with confidence, knowing that He wants to fill you with His life and peace.

Unwavering in Faith - Day 10

James 1:6 KJV

But let him ask in faith, nothing wavering....

What do you expect when you pray? When we pray with earnest expectation, we are exercising our faith. The earnest prayer of righteous people produces powerful results, and the most earnest prayers come from us recognizing our need for God.

There can be a natural tendency to shrink back when praying for the seemingly impossible, but we must remember that nothing is impossible with God. If we know the promises that God has given us, and understand His character and the principles by which He works, we can pray with confidence and trust Him for the answer. What has caused you to waiver in your expectation with God? James reminds us that faith and wavering are actually contradictory – he says “nothing wavering”. Know that God never wavers in His love for you. You can trust Him completely.

What are you trusting God for in this season?

How can you line up your expectations with the Word of God when you pray? Find promises in His Word that answer your need and write them down today.

Prayer and the Process - Day II

I Kings 18:43b-44 NLT

43 ...Seven times Elijah told him to go out and look. 44 Finally the seventh time, his servant told him, "I saw a little cloud about the size of a man's hand rising from the sea." Then Elijah shouted, "Hurry to Ahab and tell him, "Climb into your chariot and go back home. If you don't hurry, the rain will stop you!"

"How do I know God is going to say yes to my prayers?" This is a common question many people have as they seek to have a confident prayer life. However it's important to recognize that prayer is not just about the answer, but it's also about glorifying God in the process of waiting for the answer. It is our responsibility to check our motives and believe God hears us; it is through the process of prayer that God prepares us for the answer He brings.

We see an example of the process of prayer in the story of Elijah in I Kings 18. Elijah climbed to the top of the mountain to pray for rain to come. As he waited for the rain, he continued to pray, believing God would answer. When he finally saw a small cloud, he told Ahab to "get ready" because the rain was coming. Elijah knew what to pray for, and God heard him the first time he prayed, but there was preparation that needed to take place in order to receive the answer to his prayer.

It is no mistake that God waited until Elijah had prayed seven times before He answered. In the Bible, seven is the number of completion. In this account, seven represents the completion of God's process in that time of prayer. God does not want merely to answer our prayers; He wants to spend time with us to prepare us for the answer that will come. Many times we want to skip over the process involved in engaging God in prayer as we wait for our answer. But it is this very process that works maturity in us and prepares us for the answers our prayers bring. (James 1:4)

What prayers in your life are still awaiting an answer? Throughout the remainder of the fast, thank God for His process at work in your life and trust Him.

Praying Boldly - Day 12

1 Kings 18:36 KJV

And it came to pass, at the time of the offering of the evening sacrifice, that Elijah the prophet came near and said, "Lord God of Abraham, Isaac, and Israel, let it be known this day that You are God in Israel and I am Your servant..."

The sacrifice referenced above was a declaration that Elijah was a servant of the Most High God. Elijah belonged to God, and he represented God to the people. However, Elijah's boldness was not a result of who he was; it was the result of knowing God!

As children of God under the new covenant of Jesus, we don't have to be timid or fearful when coming to God in prayer. We can approach God boldly. The Amplified Bible puts it like this:

Let us then fearlessly and confidently and boldly draw near to the throne of grace (the throne of God's unmerited favor to us sinners), that we may receive mercy [for our failures] and find grace to help in good time for every need [appropriate help and well-timed help, coming just when we need it]. Hebrews 4:16 AMP

It's hard to imagine taking a fearless, confident, bold attitude when coming before God in prayer. Yet this is exactly what we are admonished to do! God has already settled the issue of our access to Him, but we can be assured, our access is not because of our own righteousness. It's because of what Jesus did on the cross. We can come to the throne in such outrageous boldness because Jesus was outrageously righteous! When we pray, we come to God in the authority of Jesus' name, and we can be confident that we will find grace, mercy and perfectly-timed help.

Do you approach God with timidity or confidence? Seek God boldly today knowing you are fully forgiven and Jesus has made you righteous. When you approach God in prayer, seek a fresh revelation of who He is in your life.

Cultivating Spiritual Hunger - Day 13

Mark 1:12-13

12 Immediately the Spirit drove Him into the wilderness. 13 And He was there in the wilderness forty days, tempted by Satan, and was with the wild beasts; and the angels ministered to Him.

Even Jesus disconnected from the world to fast and pray. The Gospels of Matthew, Mark and Luke speak of Jesus in the wilderness for 40 days and 40 nights. They also describe other times Jesus pulled away from the demands of the crowds, His ministry and even His closest friends to pray.

There are times that we, too, need to pull away from the things of the world and focus on God. "The things of the world" can certainly include more than just food. In fact, in our world, it is more likely to be television, movies, Facebook, Twitter, cell phones and internet that keep us "tuned in" to the world. None of these things are wrong in and of themselves, but they are avenues for a mental and spiritual "crowd" to gather around us and drown out the gentle voice of the Holy Spirit.

Fasting is a means of disconnecting from the distractions of daily life and consciously choosing to bring God into greater focus. Giving up physical nourishment is the first step in engaging that process. If you think about it, though, we nourish our souls as well as our bodies. We do so through reading, talking, socializing, playing and leisure. When we fill our souls up with all those things, we don't feel a hunger for God.

During this time of fasting, we are sure to feel physical hunger, but let's be intentional about cultivating spiritual hunger as well. Let's draw away from the crowds, and lay aside for a season the activities we use to nourish our souls. Instead let's allow ourselves to enter a state of spiritual hunger – a hunger for righteousness. Jesus said that being spiritually hungry is a blessed state, because we can be sure of being filled with food that truly satisfies our deepest needs. (Matthew 5:6)

During this time, you will find that being still before the Lord will set you in a place of increased strength, peace and hunger for God.

Are you disconnected from the things that nourish your body and soul? What do you need to deny yourself so that this can be a powerful time in your life?

Alignment with Heaven - Day 14

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."

Spoken Word - Day 15

John 11:43 NIV

When He had said this, Jesus called in a loud voice, "Lazarus, come out!"

The story of Lazarus' death and resurrection reflects the power of Jesus' spoken Word. He already knew in His heart the miracle that was about to take place, but His words spoke the miracle into existence.

While prayer is our declaration of our dependence on God, our spoken words can be the manifestation of what's happening in our hearts. There is power in our spoken words – whether they are used to build up or tear down. It is so important to keep our hearts filled with the truth from God's Word so that our words will produce good fruit.

As you seek God in prayer ask Him for the words and discernment that may help someone today. Pray that your words would be encouraging, edifying and aligned with the truth of God's word. Building others up around us with our words allows us to be God's instrument -- a vessel for His good work.

As God continues to fill us through this season of prayer and fasting, He wants to take what is now in our hearts and share it with others.

How can you use the power of your spoke words to speak God's truth in the lives of others?

Taking Off the Grave Clothes - Day 16

John 11:44 b NIV

...Jesus said to them, "Take off the grave clothes and let him go."

When it comes to the transforming power of God working in someone's life, God often uses people to bring about divine life-change. The story of Lazarus in John 11 illustrates it was the power of Jesus' prayer and spoken word that resurrected Lazarus from the dead – but the disciples played a role in this miracle too.

Lazarus was bound hand and foot with grave clothes and his face had been wrapped with a cloth during his time in the tomb. When he arose from his death and came out of the tomb, Jesus called on the disciples to help in the transformation process. Jesus said to them, "Take off the grave clothes and let him go." The disciples needed to help Lazarus. Likewise, we all have a part to play in the lives of those around us.

God has done some incredible things around us during the fast. Could it be that someone around you is still walking around in grave clothes? What do you need to help them let go of?

Who in your world is still walking around in grave clothes?

Think about friends and family or those around you who may not know God. What part has God called you to play in the life change He wants to bring?

Humility - Day 17

Matthew 17:14-16

14 And when they had come to the multitude, a man came to Him, kneeling down to Him and saying, 15 "Lord, have mercy on my son, for he is an epileptic and suffers severely; for he often falls into the fire and often into the water. 16 So I brought him to Your disciples, but they could not cure him."

What a great example of humility – this man approached Jesus and knelt before Him in the midst of a crowd. As the father approached Jesus, he believed that Jesus would bring his son relief. But even in his belief, his approach was humble and submitted to what Christ would choose to do. Looking further into the story, we find the father was also persistent and resisted taking offense. Though the disciples were not able to help him, he set aside his temporary disappointment in their failure and continued to seek after Jesus – the solution to his circumstance, the source of relief through his trial.

Being humble before God is realizing our need of Him, submitting to His will, pursuing Him and being confident the outcome will occur in God's perfect timing.

Be encouraged that approaching God with a heart of humility will always position you to find relief in Jesus. Don't be ashamed to humble yourself before God, even in the midst of others looking on. Offenses and disappointment may come but continue in your pursuit of Jesus. You may not get relief right away but know that God is never late and His solution is always perfect.

Prayer is a posture of humility. Humble yourself before the Lord each day and bring your cares to Him. He wants to meet you where you are and answer your every need. Pray too, that God help you with the disappointment and discouragement that we each face along the way. Is there discouragement in your heart today?

Write it down and release it to our perfect God.

Don't Worry - Pray Instead Day 18

Philippians 4:6-7 MSG

Don't fret or worry. Instead of worrying, pray. Let petitions and praises shape your worries into prayers, letting God know your concerns. Before you know it, a sense of God's wholeness, everything coming together for good, will come and settle you down.

It's wonderful what happens when Christ displaces worry at the center of your life. Worry seems to be an inescapable fact of modern life. No doubt there is plenty to worry about: our kids, the economy, global warming, war, disease... the list could go on forever! Sometimes it might seem that worry has even replaced Jesus as the focal point of our lives. Jesus Himself admonished us several times not to worry. And the great apostle, Paul, tell us in the passage above that there is an antidote to worry...prayer.

When we worry about something, we are spending energy on it, wondering what might happen, rehearsing the "if only's" and "what if's" in our mind. Why not take that same energy and refocus it on prayer instead? When we worry, we are simply talking to ourselves about our fears, but when we pray, we are taking those fears to God. We can't control the future, but in the words of Anne Graham Lotz, God is already there! He knows exactly what is going to happen and he promises to be with us every step of the journey. As we are nearing a close to this season of prayer and fasting, let's make an effort to convert our worry into prayer. As Paul says in the verse above, "let petitions and praises shape your worries into prayers," and you will find that the peace of God will guard your heart.

Are there things that you consistently worry about? As you go through your day today, recapture each worried thought and send it up to God as a prayer. See how dramatically your outlook improves when the peace of God is activated through prayer!

Walking in the Power of the Holy Spirit- Day 19

Luke 4:14

Then Jesus returned in the power of the Spirit to Galilee, and news of Him went out through all the surrounding region.

After praying and fasting for 40 days, Jesus returned to Galilee empowered to do all the Father had called Him to do. To accomplish the assignment God has for our lives, we also need the power of the Holy Spirit working in and through us. God does not expect us to go through the challenges of life without it.

Prayer and fasting brings us to the place where we can “power up”. Walking in the power of the Holy Spirit is living with a comprehension of the God-given strength and authority in our lives to walk out His will. Through prayer and fasting, God can prepare us for what lies ahead. We might not know what obstacles we’re going to face, but we can know that God will be faithful to us. He will never leave us and He will empower us to meet whatever challenges life may bring.

Today as you worship God in prayer, let Him know that you refuse to go into the future without His power and that you want all that He has for you.

A New Wineskin - Day 20

Luke 5:37-38 NLT

“And no one puts new wine into old wineskins. For the new wine would burst the wineskins, spilling the wine and ruining the skins. New wine must be stored in new wineskins.”

Two things do not mix: new wine and old wineskins. The reason is simple: old wineskins cannot grow and stretch to hold the new wine. The new wine God wants to fill you with is expansive; it is a picture of God’s Spirit. It always brings an enlargement. A container that is dead, dry, stiff and shrinking back cannot be entrusted as a storehouse for God’s valued treasure. Our vessels must be prepared for the fresh, dynamic, living presence of God – everything we do will flow from it. This preparation comes through prayer and fasting, producing a container that is ready for the new thing God wants to do. God’s new wine always changes us – it expands our faith, enlarges our purpose, and brings renewed vision. Everything God does is expansive, He is not into shrinking wineskins – it is up to us to shed them. As we seek Him in this season, let’s shed the old wineskin and ask God to fully prepare our hearts for what’s to come.

What has caused you to shrink back in your expectation of what God wants to do in your life? Are you ready to be expanded beyond recognition?

That’s what God’s new wine will do in and through you.

Pray the Lord will expand your life to glorify Him, giving you boldness to step out and be

What's Your Assignment? - Day 21

Luke 4:1-2, 14-15 NIV

1 Jesus, full of the Holy Spirit, returned from the Jordan and was led by the Spirit in the desert, 2 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...14 Jesus returned to Galilee in the power of the Spirit, and news about Him spread through the whole countryside. 15 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.

What's Next?

Consistency is King. Come to a Worship Gathering regularly. Worship and release your worries before God. Listen and take notes during the message.

Begin a Bible reading plan and read the Bible for yourself. YouVersion.com has a free online Bible and Bible App with hundreds of reading plans for you to choose from.

Still struggling to overcome some things in your life? You need others, you need community, we all need community. Plug into a community group starting in a couple of weeks, get real with some folks and pray for each other. Visit www.societychurch.com/groups for more information.