A wooden bowl is centered in the upper half of the image, resting on a dark, textured wooden surface. The bowl is made of light-colored wood with visible grain patterns. The text is printed in white, bold, sans-serif capital letters inside the bowl.

GUIDE TO FASTING & THE DANIEL FAST

A 21 DAY JOURNEY FROM CROSS POINTE CHURCH



A GUIDE TO FASTING

What is fasting? Fasting is voluntarily going without food—or any other regularly enjoyed, good gift from God—for a spiritual purpose. One significant part of fasting is the time it creates for prayer, meditation on God’s Word or acts of love for others.

Why fast? The idea behind fasting is that when you empty yourself of something [food], you intentionally take time to fill yourself with something else. When you feel hungry, let it remind you to pray, to read the Bible or recall Bible verses you are memorizing, or perform an act of service for someone. If you don’t have a plan for what to do when you fast, then you’re just going hungry.

Fasting is ultimately an expression of humility and dependence on God. Fasting is more about replacing than it is about abstaining. It is about replacing daily intakes of food, entertainment, and human contact with focused times of prayer, feeding on large amounts of the Word of God and spiritual listening. One of the great benefits of fasting is a heightened awareness of God’s presence and power in our lives. It is not that God has moved but that we have.

Fasting involves an attitude of trust and dependence. We depend on God to fill that which is being left empty. This is perhaps a succinct definition of faith: dependence on the Creator to fill and supply what is needed. Fasting is an act of spiritual maturing, and growing in your relationship with God.

A fast is also a time to come back to trust and dependence on God. You might pray: “Dear God, give me the energy beyond my own physical state, at this time.” In essence, this is the definition of grace. As people, we have limits. But with grace, we appeal to power that comes from without as opposed to within. In other words: *Grace is something good I need, that I cannot give myself.* Fasting has a great way of moving us towards a deeper spiritual dependency and away from willful self-dependency.

Biblical examples of fasting. The Bible contains instruction and examples of fasting. Ezra 8:23 shows that prayer and fasting go together. In Matthew 6:16-18, Jesus gives instructions on fasting—He says, “When you fast...”, assuming that fasting will be a part of our spiritual disciplines. Jesus fasted when being tempted by the devil in Luke 4:2. In Joel 2:12 we see fasting as an act of repentance and humility toward God.

When to fast? Choose a time period for your fast. A day is a good place to start. It might be a significant date like Good Friday, or for a special purpose like an evangelistic event, or for a specific reason, like a relative in the hospital or a friend going through a difficult experience.

Can you fast from other things beside food? You can fast from television, social media, electronics, sporting or recreational events. The goal is to spend time away from something you desire, so that you may concentrate on desiring God even more. In the Bible, however, we see fasting always centered around abstaining from food. And as food is a universal need, nearly everyone in good health can choose to fast from it.

Practical advice. When you fast you should be in good health. Consult your doctor if you are on medication or a special diet to know the risks associated with fasting. Do not deprive yourself of water during a fast if it is longer than a day or two. For longer fasts—several days to a week—you may also want to have some juice or broth. A fast is not meant to be debilitating or self abuse. As much as possible continue your daily routine of work, exercise or other activities. Spend your fast laying on the couch because you feel weak defeats the purpose. Fasting involves dependence on God; He will provide the energy and strength you need.

Fasting Hygiene. Refrain from taking an excessively hot bath or shower. Having a very hot bath or shower during a prolonged fast can cause dizziness, and you may be unable to continue. Instead wash in lukewarm water. It is important to bathe or shower regularly during a fast as impurities in the body can be secreted through the pores of the skin and may cause a foul odor. Also be sure to brush your teeth often as fasting produces bad breath.

THE DANIEL FAST

What is the Daniel Fast? There are several examples of fasting we see in Scripture. Jesus practice what we might call a “normal” fast, which is abstaining from all foods, but still drinking water. Jesus fasted for 40 days [Matthew 4:2]. Another fast is an “absolute fast”, where the faster abstains from everything. Usually this fast is much shorter in duration, a few days at most. Examples of the absolute fast are: Moses [Deuteronomy 9:9-18 and Exodus 34:28]; Elijah [1 Kings 19:8]; Ezra [Ezra 10:6]; Esther and her household [Esther 4:16]; and Paul [Acts 9:9].

The Daniel Fast is what we would call a partial fast. Daniel, Shadrack, Meshach and Abednego only ate fruits and vegetables and drank only water [Daniel 1:15] during a 10-day fast, and later on Daniel alone practiced a partial fast for 21 days [Daniel 10:3]. The Daniel Fast, then, is a great way to practice fasting for most people because you are minimizing your food intake, while still getting a smaller but healthy intake that will help you maintain strength for other life activities.

Other partial fasts might include skipping one or more meals each day, but having at least one full meal.

What to do for the next 21 days. Our churchwide observance of the Daniel Fast will last for 21 days [three weeks]. We are challenging you to fast using the “Daniel Fast” method as follows:

- Drink only water for the next 21 days.
- Eat only fruits and vegetables for the next 21 days.
- You can consume fruits and vegetables in juice form for the next 21 days, but avoid using juices with significant added sugar or flavoring.
- Spend time daily in God’s Word and in prayer for the next 21 days.
- If you feel ill or have an adverse physical reaction to the fast during the month, for your health, break the fast and resume other foods, but continue in prayer and God’s Word daily during these three weeks regardless.

Use this guide for your time in the Word. On the following pages we’ve provided 21 days of devotional thoughts, Bible readings, and prayer prompts for you to use during your fast. This guide is in keeping with our church’s mission and vision to *point people to Jesus and inspire them to live the cross shaped life*. We do this as we worship, disciple, serve and send each week. Let the month of fasting be a spiritual journey for you as you rediscover God’s Word and recommit to His mission for your life.

DANIEL FAST SUGGESTED FOODS

Let's get the mechanics out of the way first. What should you eat during the Daniel Fast?

Vegetables. All vegetables are allowed (fresh, frozen, dried, juiced, and canned).

Fruits. All fruit is allowed (fresh, frozen, dried, juiced, and canned). However, any dried fruit shouldn't contain added sugar (check ingredients to be sure).

Whole grains. Amaranth, barley, brown rice, buckwheat, bulgur, freekeh, millet, oats, purple rice, quinoa, rye, sorghum, spelt, teff, whole grain pasta, whole wheat, and wild rice.

Beans and legumes. Black beans, black-eyed peas, cannellini beans, garbanzo beans (chickpeas), great northern beans, kidney beans, lentils, peanuts, pinto beans, and split peas.

Nuts and seeds. Almonds, Brazil nuts, cashews, hazelnuts, macadamia nuts, nut butters, peanuts (actually legumes but people think of them as nuts), pecans, pepitas (pumpkin seeds), pine nuts, pistachios, poppy seeds, walnuts, sesame seeds, soy nuts, sunflower seeds.

Oils. Oils (such as coconut, olive, and sesame, for example) are allowed but should be used minimally. For example, you can sauté foods in olive oil but avoid deep-frying them.

Other. Unleavened bread (whole grain bread made without yeast, sugars, or preservatives. All herbs, spices, and seasonings are allowed, including salt and pepper.

Beverages. Water should be the main beverage on your Daniel fast. Distilled, filtered, sparkling, spring, and mineral water are allowed as well. You may have 100% fruit juice (just don't overdo it).

FOODS TO AVOID

Animal products. Meat (bacon, beef, bison, chicken, lamb, pork, and turkey), dairy, (butter, cheese, cream, milk, and yogurt), fish/seafood, eggs.

Added sugar. Agave nectar, artificial sweeteners, brown rice syrup, brown sugar, cane juice, corn syrup, honey, malt syrup, molasses, and raw sugar.

Yeast. Leavened bread isn't part of the Daniel fast.

Refined grains. White flour and white rice. Only whole grains are allowed on the Daniel fast. A whole grain product contains the entire grain kernel—the bran, germ, and endosperm.

Processed food. Foods that contain artificial flavorings, chemicals, food additives, and preservatives.

Deep-fried food. Examples are corn chips, French fries, and potato chips, other types of chips like Doritos.

Solid fats. Butter, lard, margarine, and shortening.

Chocolate. Milk chocolate, semi-sweet chocolate, dark chocolate, chocolate syrup, and cacao.

Caffeinated and alcoholic beverages. Alcohol, coffee, caffeinated tea, and energy drinks. Yes, we said avoid coffee. Seriously, no coffee.

You'll find links to Daniel fast resources online, as well as links to recipes for the fast and general medical advice on fasting, at crosspointechurch.com/fast.

DAILY DEVOTIONALS & PRAYER

DAY 1: COMMITTING YOUR FAST TO GOD

“Then John’s disciples came and asked him, ‘How is it that we and the Pharisees fast, but your disciples do not fast?’ Jesus answered, ‘How can the guests of the bridegroom mourn while he is with them? The time will come when the bridegroom will be taken from them; then they will fast.’” Matthew 9:14-15

“I proclaimed a fast, so that we might humble ourselves before our God and ask him for a safe journey for us and our children, with all our possessions.” Ezra 8:21

During the next few weeks you are participating in a spiritual exercise. Begin today by committing your fast to God. When we begin a spiritual discipline, God takes note, and He will use this time to infuse Scripture into your mind and life, to impart His instruction, to strengthen your faith and resolve, to embolden your spirit and to grow your passion for knowing Him more. When you complete your fast, if you simply listen for God in your prayer time, and take in the Scriptures you study, you will come away with a greater knowledge of Your creator, and your role in His world.

Separate from this devotional guide, you may want to keep a journal if you don’t already. Or just write down thoughts in the margins of your Bible. You’re making a determined and lengthy spiritual commitment—don’t waste it! Resolve now to gain the most you can from the experience.

Prayer: *God, as I begin this 21-day fast, I’m asking You to speak to me directly through my time in prayer, and through Your Word, the Bible. Replace my desire for food today with a desire to see this fast through to completion. Help me to understand You more during this fast. Teach me Your will and Your ways. Bring clarity to my purpose for You and where You want me to direct my time, efforts and energies in this life. I pray this in Your name, Amen.*

DAY 2: LOOK AWAY FROM THE DISTRACTIONS

“Therefore we also, since we are surrounded by so great a cloud of witnesses, let us lay aside every weight, and the sin which so easily ensnares us, and let us run with endurance the race that is set before us, looking unto Jesus, the author and finisher of our faith, who for the joy that was set before Him endured the cross, despising the shame, and has sat down at the right hand of the throne of God.” Hebrews 12:1-2

As you embark on your fast, think specifically about taking the focus off distractions in your pursuit of God. Habits, negative choices and diversions weigh down our lives. Even good works

can become the focus rather than God being our focus. As you fast and pray, turn your eyes to Jesus so that all the things of this earth will increasingly lose their hold on us. Look for ways to find satisfaction in the goodness of God rather than the things of man. Throughout your day consciously choose to take refuge in Him and draw on His strength.

Prayer: *Father, the world around me is literally filled with distractions. The devices I walk around with, the media I consume, the events and activities I'm involved in—everything is competing for my attention. Help me today to give You my full and undivided attention during this fast. Help me to refocus my thoughts on You. Instead of finding moments in between other activities for You, help me to make You today's most important and significant priority. Then, as I focus on You and listen to You, help me to learn from Your Word and to put into practice that which You are teaching me. In Jesus' name I pray, Amen.*

“Paul said the one thing he wants to do every day of his life, was to know Jesus and to make Jesus known. I want to know the person of Jesus. I want to know the power of Jesus. I want to know the passion of Jesus.”

—JAMES MERRITT

DAY 3: TURN FROM YOUR SINS

“Praise be to the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ! In his great mercy he has given us new birth into a living hope through the resurrection of Jesus Christ from the dead, and into an inheritance that can never perish, spoil or fade. This inheritance is kept in heaven for you, who through faith are shielded by God's power until the coming of the salvation that is ready to be revealed in the last time. In all this you greatly rejoice, though now for a little while you may have had to suffer grief in all kinds of trials. These have come so that the proven genuineness of your faith—of greater worth than gold, which perishes even though refined by fire—may result in praise, glory and honor when Jesus Christ is revealed. Though you have not seen him, you love him; and even though you do not see him now, you believe in him and are filled with an inexpressible and glorious joy, for you are receiving the end result of your faith, the salvation of your souls.” 1 Peter 1:3-9

When we start a fast determined to take our eyes off ourselves, our circumstances, our struggles and look up to see Jesus, we remind ourselves that it is He that saves us, sustains us and secures our destiny. God chooses to see His people set free from the besetting sins that

affect our relationship with Him. Today focus your prayers on those hurts, habits and hangups that Jesus overcame for you. Be reminded that through Christ, God has set you free to be the person He intended, to fulfill your greatest mission in life, as a member of His family. Let these days refocus our look towards Him, remembering that the direction of our sight determines the location of our thought.

Prayer: *Father in Heaven, during my fast bring to light those besetting sins that hurt my relationship with You and my effectiveness in Your mission. I thank You for saving me, and I thank You for removing the sin penalty from my life. May I experience renewed freedom and victory as I lean into you this day during my fast. I acknowledge just like I depended on You to pay the cost of my sin on the cross, I am depending on You for strength today. In Jesus' name, Amen.*

DAY 4: THE ELEPHANT IN THE CHURCH

"Be of the same mind toward one another. Do not set your mind on high things, but associate with the humble. Do not be wise in your own opinion." Romans 12:16

Have you ever heard the saying "Elephant in the Room"? For the church, one elephant in our room is *accountability*. We have a hard time asking for help. Whether it was from a family member, friend, or even fellow believer, for some reason we equate a need for help as a sign of weakness. As Christians, we must instead seek out and embrace the accountability of the friends and loved ones God has placed around us. Without accountability, the voice of God can sound a lot like your own. Today, become a person of accountability. During your fast, seek out one or more relationships with fellow believers and begin asking for help and accountability in areas where you struggle.

Prayer: *Dear Lord, I humble myself before You and ask You to forgive me of thinking that I am wise in my own opinion. Help me see when I need to be held accountable for wrong actions or thoughts. Help me to see that my need for help is not a sign of weakness. Father I want to please You in all that I do and say, I want to be a true Ambassador for Christ sharing Your Gospel without any issues that will hold me back from being who You want me to be. In Jesus' name, Amen.*

"There is one line of work you should never get out of and that is working in God's church, working with God's people, and working for God's glory."

—JAMES MERRITT

DAY 5: CONFESSION AND REPENTANCE

*“When they had assembled at Mizpah, they drew water and poured it out before the LORD. On that day they fasted and there they confessed, ‘We have sinned against the LORD.’”
1 Samuel 7:6*

“Search me, God, and know my heart; test me and know my concerns. See if there is any offensive way in me; lead me in the everlasting way.” Psalms 139: 23-24

Ask God to help you regularly seek examination by the Holy Spirit and repent from wrongdoings that have become shadows in your life. When we began a relationship with Jesus, we turned away from our sin and chose to follow Him. But are still in a sinful world, and face temptations, and we still sin. Repentance then is both a one-time act that Jesus blesses by saving us, and a continual act as we strive to become more like Him as we live each day. As you fast, consider where you may need to confess and repent of those things in your life that you know are not pleasing to God. What have you confessed lately? What have you repented of lately?

Prayer: *Father in Heaven, show me through this fast those areas of spiritual weakness and self-reliance in my life in order that I may confess them and receive your cleansing and purifying forgiveness. Father, I want to experience spiritual refreshment and strength that can only come through you. In the name of Jesus Christ our Lord, Amen.*

DAY 6: FOR THOSE WHO ARE SUFFERING

“Is this not the fast which I choose... is it not to share your food with the hungry and to provide the poor wanderer with shelter—when you see the naked, to clothe him, and not to turn away from your own flesh and blood?” Isaiah 58:6-7

One of the focuses of fasting is for those who are suffering. During your fast today, turn your hunger pain into requests, prayers and petitions for the suffering around you. Today, focus your prayers on those suffering close to you and those suffering throughout the world. Our church has ministry avenues where you can serve those who are suffering, whether it is a neighbor who needs food or clothing, a friend who is sick, a coworker who is going through difficulty in their marriage, or a family member who is knee deep in financial distress. Suffering is an opportunity for us to minister to those around us. Pray for them, then seek out practical ways you can help in the name of Jesus.

Prayer: *Father, today I turn my prayers towards all the suffering in our world. Make a way for food, clothing, shelter and medical supplies to reach those in critical need. Send medical help to those in need. Grant the rescuers and all the first response workers your strength, wisdom, compassion and spiritual insight to care for those in need. Give me opportunities to help and serve the suffering. In the merciful name of Jesus, Amen.*

DAY 7: HUMILITY

“Therefore, as God’s chosen people, holy and dearly loved, clothe yourselves with compassion, kindness, humility, gentleness and patience. Bear with each other and forgive one another if any of you has a grievance against someone. Forgive as the Lord forgave you. And over all these virtues put on love, which binds them all together in perfect unity.” Colossians 3:12-14:

“Do nothing out of rivalry or conceit, but in humility consider others as more important than you.” Philippians 2:3

We can do and achieve nothing of worth or eternal value outside of God. Humility expresses our need for Him. In submitting every day to His will and plans for our lives, it is declaring that He knows best and that His timing in our lives is perfect. Fasting is a humbling experience, because we are expressing our dependence on God for the most basic of our needs. We simply can’t do it on our own. In prayer we have a posture of humility, acknowledging God and inviting Him to be Lord over every area of our lives. Submit to God afresh today in all areas of life.

Prayer: *Father God, I humble myself before You today. You created me and You sustain me. Every breath I take is because of You. Help me to live a life that isn’t self-sufficient. Remove areas of pride where I put my trust in myself instead of in You. Give me strength during this fast and use it to remind me that I depend on You for everything. In Your name I pray, Amen.*

DAY 8: PRAYER

“So we fasted and petitioned our God about this, and he answered our prayer.” Ezra 8:23

During your fast, remember to pray specifically. Target your prayer requests with petitions for yourself, your friends and family, your community, country and world. Think about your neighbors that surround you—what is their spiritual condition? Your coworkers, your family members, your classmates at school—do they know Jesus? Are there specific circumstances in the lives of people you know—illness, disease or suffering, a challenge, a broken relationship? Each of these is an opportunity to lift up someone in prayer.

Prayer: *Today God I am praying specifically for those family and friends who come to my mind and have great need. I am thinking about those people I know who do not know Jesus. Help me to be an influence in their lives toward faith and toward You. Use me to accomplish your will in the lives of those around me even as I pray now for their deepest needs. [Continue praying here by name and specific need.] In Jesus’ name, Amen.*

DAY 9: BOLDNESS TO SHARE THE GOSPEL

“Pray also for me, that the message may be given to me when I open my mouth to make known with boldness the mystery of the Gospel.” Ephesians 6:19

One question we ask frequently at our church is “Who Is Your One?” Who is one person you are praying for who doesn’t know Jesus, and are asking God to give you the opportunity to share the Gospel with them? When we don’t have specific names or a plan to share our faith, we simply won’t. Most Christ-followers don’t share the Gospel with others. Instead, make a turn today and ask God to give you boldness to share the Gospel with others with whom you come in contact. During your fast, be reminded as you hunger of the great spiritual need of people who are without Jesus. Share with someone this week how Jesus forever changed your life.

Prayer: *God, help me to be honest, brave and bold in my witness for You. I know people who are far from You, and do not know Jesus. Give me a burden to see them come to spiritual life through a relationship with You. God, remind me that it’s not my words or an eloquent presentation that saves anyone—it’s Your Word, the Gospel, that draws people back to You. I’m just a spokesperson, but I’m the only Christian connected to some of the people You have put me in the position to reach. Open up an opportunity today for me to share the Gospel. In Your name I pray, Amen.*

“You must live as if tomorrow will never come, but you should also live in such a way that you are ready if it does.”

—JAMES MERRITT

DAY 11: SPIRIT OF UNITY

“Now may the God of endurance and encouragement grant you agreement with one another, according to Christ Jesus, so that you may glorify the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ with a united mind and voice.” Romans 15:5-6

We are in such a divided state in our culture. Politics divide us. Race and class divide us. Even hobbies like sports divide us. In Scripture, Jesus prayed in John 17 that His disciples would “be one” so that the world would know them in part because of their unity. Being with other believers, and sharing a common vision and purpose, is a powerful witness to the world around us that we belong to Jesus. When we are united in Christ, many of our cultural divisions fade into irrelevance. Today as you fast, be reminded of those Christians you are connected to in your church or your area, and how, in Jesus, you are united by a common Lord and a common purpose.

Prayer: *God, today I pray for a spirit of unity as I work together with other Christians in ministry. I want to be an encourager toward unity. Help me to look for ways to bring people together versus divide them. Help me to overlook small differences and instead focus on the common virtues found in Your Word and in a relationship with You. God, use the unity of our church to accomplish great works for Your glory in our community. In Jesus' name, Amen.*

DAY 12: REST

“He said to them, ‘Come away by yourselves to a remote place and rest a while.’ For many people were coming and going, and they did not even have time to eat.” Mark 6:31

Could someone describe you as “busy”? Is your day filled from end to end with various commitments to marriage, work, family, church? During your fast, you’ll have somewhat less energy. Avoid the temptation to be spiritually and personally lazy. Instead, set aside more time, and specific time, for rest. Living a full life is great, but God never intended us to ride the edge of exhaustion. In Scripture He set aside a day of rest each week, the Sabbath. And God Himself rested—did He need to rest? No the purpose of rest isn’t just to recuperate physically. We need rest for our minds and souls. Schedule time each day, and each week, for rest.

Prayer: *Father, remind me when I get busy that you never intended me to burn the candle at both ends every day, and that You desire me to be rested. Help me to have the will to put things down from time to time and enjoy moments of rest each day, and to keep the Sabbath by resting each week. During my fast, use rest to restore my physical energy. But also let me rest to restore my mental and spiritual life, so that I can be a better disciple. In Jesus' name, Amen.*

DAY 13: DEPENDENCE ON GOD

“Trust in the LORD with all your heart, and do not rely on your own understanding; think about Him in all your ways, and He will guide you on the right paths.” Proverbs 3:5-6

Most of us have a GPS on our smartphone or in our car. These days it’s incredibly difficult to be lost, when you have a device that not only shows you where you are, but how to get to anywhere from there. In life, many of us have become our own GPS—we navigate on our own and don’t ask for directions. This is not how God intended us to live. In fact, He has designed us to depend on Him, versus to be self-sufficient. Part of having a vital relationship with God is to constantly be asking Him, “Where should I go? How should I live? What should I do in this situation?” How do we depend on God? Not only by asking Him for help when we don’t know what to do, but asking Him to guide even if we already believe we know what to do.

Prayer: *God, help me to depend on you daily. Remind me to ask you about each and every decision, direction and choice I have. Let your Guiding Hand be on me daily, helping me to reach my greatest potential for Your Kingdom as I seek You. Sometimes even though I believe I know what*

to do, I realize that You may actually have other plans for me—something I'll miss if I become self-sufficient. You didn't design me that way, God, so I acknowledge that often I don't depend on You when I need to. Let me grow in this area of life so that as I depend on You more, my relationship with You will also grow. In Jesus' name I pray, Amen.

“Worship is giving all that I am to all that God is. Listen carefully. You can come to church. You can lift your hands. You can singing to the top of your lungs. You can listen to every word that is preached. You can even drop a dime or a dollar in the offering, but you have not worshiped until you have given all that you are to all that God is.”

—JAMES MERRITT

DAY 14: WORSHIPING GOD

“Let us go to his dwelling place; let us worship at his footstool!” Psalm 132:7

Worship through song is one of the most powerful ways to connect directly to the love, compassion, power, and grace of God. In worship, our hearts become soft, aware, and open to the glorious majesties of God's nearness. In worship, God makes his nearness known to us and fills us anew with the power of his manifest presence. We are created to worship our Creator.

The Psalms are filled with exhortations to worship. Psalm 95:1-3 says, “Oh come, let us sing to the Lord; let us make a joyful noise to the rock of our salvation! Let us come into his presence with thanksgiving; let us make a joyful noise to him with songs of praise! For the Lord is a great God, and a great King above all gods.” When we give glory to God, we place him on the throne of our hearts and posture ourselves in the only position in which we will find peace: one of submission and humility. In the act of worship, we lay down everything we've allowed to matter more than God's perfect will for us and receive the grace to love him above all else.

Prayer: Heavenly Father, today I worship you. I praise You for Who You are, and I thank You for creating me, for saving me, and for having a relationship with me. I want to respond to what You have done by giving you all that I am. So again today I pledge my heart and life to You, and ask that you help me make every day a spiritual act of worship. Help me to submit to you and to follow you with every ounce of my being. I pray this in Jesus' name, Amen.

DAY 15: DISCIPLESHIP UNDIVIDED

“Teach me your way, Lord, that I may rely on your faithfulness; give me an undivided heart, that I may fear your name.” Psalm 86:11

To have an undivided heart—a whole heart—means to be fully devoted, committed, or “all in.” It means at the deepest level, your soul, your love, and your focus in life is on one thing. For the whole-hearted disciple, your heart belongs to Jesus. The realities of life, the daily relationships and responsibilities tossed aside or ignored. Instead, your heart is rooted in Christ, resting in Him, and everything else in life flows out of that. This is what God desires—that your heart is fully and singly devoted to Him. It takes a commitment to continually choose Him above all else. It won’t be easy, but the rewards are immeasurable, eternal, and life-giving each day.

Prayer: *God, help me to be a whole-hearted disciple. I don’t want to follow You halfway. Even as life presses in, keep me from being swayed by the culture I live in, the many opinions and opportunities that surround me, and the responsibilities I have. Instead let my day begin and end with You, and let everything else about my life flow from that. Remind me in Your Word of my commitment to You. Help me to be all that You have designed me to be as I follow You daily. I pray in Jesus’ name, Amen.*

DAY 16: SEASONED SPEECH

“Your speech should always be gracious, seasoned with salt, so that you may know how you should answer each person.” Colossians 4:6

In today’s world, the way we speak to one another means more than ever before. The anonymity of social media has many of us shouting obscenities from behind our keyboards, and angry words spill over in everyday life, from the drive-through to the agent on the telephone to our neighbor across the street. The way we talk to one another should reflect the God we serve. During your fast, which is an act of humility, consider how you can humble yourself and speak with kindness and grace at all times and to all people. Your gracious and softened words may just make a difference today in world filled with harsh, biting and spiteful tones.

Prayer: *Heavenly Father, help me to know how to respond to every person I meet. Especially in disagreement, teach me to speak with grace and kindness. Let me use my seasoned speech as a tool to connect with people, to encourage them, to love them and to let them know that I care about them. Guard me against the temptation of always wanting to be heard versus first to hear. I pray this in the name of Jesus, Amen.*

DAY 17: PERSISTENCE

"You make known to me the path of life; in your presence there is fullness of joy; at your right hand there are pleasures forevermore." Psalm 16:11

A fast for three weeks is a challenge, but it also teaches something valuable in our faith: persistence. Some will have a profound experience after three weeks of fasting and prayer, while others may not have a "big spiritual moment". The important thing is that you were diligent in seeking the Lord—His timing is His business and He uses our commitment to spiritual disciplines to hone us, form us, make us over time. Often God uses spiritual disciplines to prepare us for something to come. Our responsibility is simple—it is to be faithful! Be encouraged that "your labor in the Lord is not in vain." In some subtle but important ways, this time has realigned you to the presence and purposes of God. Prayer and fasting isn't magic; it isn't a way to manipulate God into fulfilling selfish agendas. Fasting isn't therapy, either, where individuals or groups try to feel better about the way things are. Prayer and fasting are instead the mysterious workings of the Spirit, in which we encounter the omnipotent God and somehow can be used of God in ways that wouldn't happen if we didn't pray fast.

Prayer: *God, I have sought You these weeks with my heart. I want more of You and more of Your Kingdom. I invite you more fully into my life and into the life of our church. I ask that I might see the needs of the people around me with Your eyes and feel their need with Your heart—especially people without Jesus and without hope. Compel me from safety and comfort into the world with Jesus' saving message. Thank You for meeting me in this season of prayer and fasting. In Jesus' name, Amen.*

"You will never ever get to true worship until you understand God is not after your money or your time. God wants you! Jesus didn't die for your money. He didn't die for your time. He died for you! To put it simply, what God wants is your complete surrender. It is the heart of worship to worship right from the heart."

—JAMES MERRITT

DAY 18: TASTE AND SEE

"Taste and see that the LORD is good; blessed is the man who takes refuge in him." Psalm 34:8

It is only by coming into contact with the various flavors contained in food that specific nerve endings and receptors microscopically embedded into the surface of our tongues (that we call taste buds); that a pleasurable sensation is generated in the brain allowing us to experience the wonder of taste, which in turn sends a message to say this is good. In the same way it is only as we come into contact with God and His Word and realize that the experience registers deep in our spirit as good. Be encouraged as you pray and fast that it is in the making time to contact and connect with God in prayer and learn more about Him through His Word that we will also experience and know that we can taste and see that He is indeed good.

Prayer: *Father God, thank You for giving me Your Word, and allowing me to taste from it each day and know that You are good, and that my hope and refuge are in You. Use Your Word to teach me more about Who You are, and what You would have me do in my life. Help the Bible to be more than just a book I am reading and studying. Allow it to change my life as I learn Your will and Your ways. Most of all, let the Gospel be something that I take to heart, and readily share with others. In Jesus' name, Amen.*

DAY 19: BUILDING FAITH

"And Jesus rebuked the demon, and it came out of him; and the child was cured from that very hour. Then the disciples came to Jesus privately and said, 'Why could we not cast it out?' So Jesus said to them, 'Because of your unbelief; for assuredly, I say to you, 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. However, this kind does not go out except by prayer and fasting.'" Matthew 17:18-21

Prayer and fasting are not undertaken with the objective of changing God or His will. Rather, we are putting ourselves in a place for God to change us. As we open ourselves for Him to speak to us we align our hearts, our passions, our desires and our direction with His, our faith is built. We are learning to trust God more and depend on Him more. In the story of the boy overtaken by a demon, Jesus remarked that prayer and fasting can build our faith to see that which is impossible become reality for his glory. Be encouraged to complete the journey!

Prayer: *God, use these days to build my faith. Help me to understand You more, to see You more clearly in every area of life, and to trust You to guide me, to protect me, and to place me on mission for Your glory. As I fast, I'm learning that You are the One Who sustains me. Let me draw nourishment from the spiritual food of Your Word, and let me depend on it more and more every day of my life. I pray this in Jesus' name, Amen.*

DAY 20: FINDING PURPOSE FOR THE DAYS AHEAD

“Jesus, full of the Holy Spirit, left the Jordan and was led by the Spirit into the wilderness, 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 was teaching in their synagogues, and everyone praised him.” Luke 4:1-2; 14-15

Consider what the Lord has for us as our assignment for the days and weeks ahead. Fasting and prayer can be significant in helping us find a clear vision for God’s specific path for us and the part we need to play in the bigger picture He is painting. Jesus went into the desert to fast and pray for forty days full of the Spirit—He fully knew God and His character. He returned to Galilee walking in the power of the Spirit—He knew that He had God-given strength, authority and the ability to fulfill what God had for Him to do. The power of the spirit is essential for us to accomplish what God’s assignment for each of us is. Seek God today for clarity and confirmation of His purpose for you.

Prayer: *Father, I know that you have a purpose for me in Your kingdom. I pray that you will grant me a clear path ahead and equip me for the cause to which You have called me. God, help me to set aside my own hopes and dreams, and focus first on the dreams You have for me and the eternal purpose for which You created me. Use my life to minister to others, to serve my community in Your name, and to share Your Gospel with everyone I come into contact with. In Jesus’ name, Amen.*

“ Now I know there are many things we all want from God. We want Him to end our crisis. We want Him to protect our jobs, our investments, our family, our livelihood. But have you ever stopped to consider this question in this tough times we are all living through: What does God want from us?”

—JAMES MERRITT

DAY 21: ANYTHING IS POSSIBLE

“He went a little farther, and fell on the ground, and prayed that if it were possible, the hour might pass from Him. And He said, ‘Abba, Father, all things are possible for You. Take this cup away from Me; nevertheless, not what I will, but what You will.’” Mark 14:35-36

What impossible thing are you praying for this year? What has the Lord revealed to you during these days of fasting? What bold, courageous and audacious request has He put in your heart? We believe in a God for whom nothing is impossible. It is so important to hold on to the expectation of a fulfilled promise, an answered prayer, a transformed tomorrow a changed life, just as Jesus reminded His Father, “all things are possible for You”. Remember that greater than our prayers, greater than our cries, greater than our faith and belief is the sovereign will of the Father, even Jesus acknowledged that it was the will of the father that surpassed the desires of the Son. Let’s maintain appropriate perspective of our God.

Prayer: *Heavenly Father, thank you for these days of fasting and prayer and Scripture. Thank you for using this time to replace my dependence on food with a growing dependence on You. I want You to work mightily in my life this year. I am ready to move forward with greater conviction and confidence that You will accomplish what You set out to do in my life. Help me to focus on you this year, to rely on You more, and to engage in Your mission for Your kingdom with my whole heart. This time in my life is Yours, Lord. Use it as You will. In Jesus’ name, Amen.*

Take Time To Be Holy

BY WILLIAM D. LONGSTAFF

*Take time to be holy, speak oft with thy Lord;
Abide in Him always, and feed on His Word.
Make friends of God’s children, help those who are weak,
Forgetting in nothing His blessing to seek.
Take time to be holy, the world rushes on;
Spend much time in secret, with Jesus alone.
By looking to Jesus, like Him thou shalt be;
Thy friends in thy conduct His likeness shall see.
Take time to be holy, let Him be thy Guide;
And run not before Him, whatever betide.
In joy or in sorrow, still follow the Lord,
And, looking to Jesus, still trust in His Word.
Take time to be holy, be calm in thy soul,
Each thought and each motive beneath His control.
Thus led by His Spirit to fountains of love,
Thou soon shalt be fitted for service above.*

MORE WAYS TO PRAY

Please spend some time praying for the following:

- ☐ Pray for people everywhere according to their needs
- ☐ Pray for the church throughout the world
- ☐ For its unity in witness and service
- ☐ For all pastors and ministers and the people whom they serve
- ☐ For all Christians in our community
- ☐ That God will confirm His church in faith, increase it in love and preserve it in peace.
- ☐ Pray for all nations and peoples of the earth, and for those in authority among them; for all who serve the common good, that by God's help they may seek justice and truth, and live in peace
- ☐ Pray for all who suffer and are afflicted in body or in mind
- ☐ Pray for the hungry and the homeless, the destitute and the oppressed
- ☐ Pray for the sick, the wounded and the crippled
- ☐ Pray for those in loneliness, fear and anguish
- ☐ Pray for those who face temptation, doubt and despair
- ☐ Pray for the sorrowful and bereaved
- ☐ Pray for prisoners and captives, and those in mortal danger
- ☐ That God in His mercy will comfort and relieve them, and grant them the knowledge of His love, and stir up in us the will and patience to minister to their needs
- ☐ Pray for all who have not received the Gospel of Christ
- ☐ Pray for those who have never heard the word of salvation
- ☐ Pray for those who have lost their faith
- ☐ Pray for those hardened by sin or indifference
- ☐ Pray for the contemptuous and the scornful
- ☐ Pray for those who are enemies of the cross of Christ and persecutors of his disciples
- ☐ Pray for those who in the name of Christ have persecuted others
- ☐ Pray that God will open their hearts to the truth, and lead them to faith and obedience

PRAYER JOURNAL

Date_____

What I'm praying for today _____

Prayers God has answered _____

Date_____

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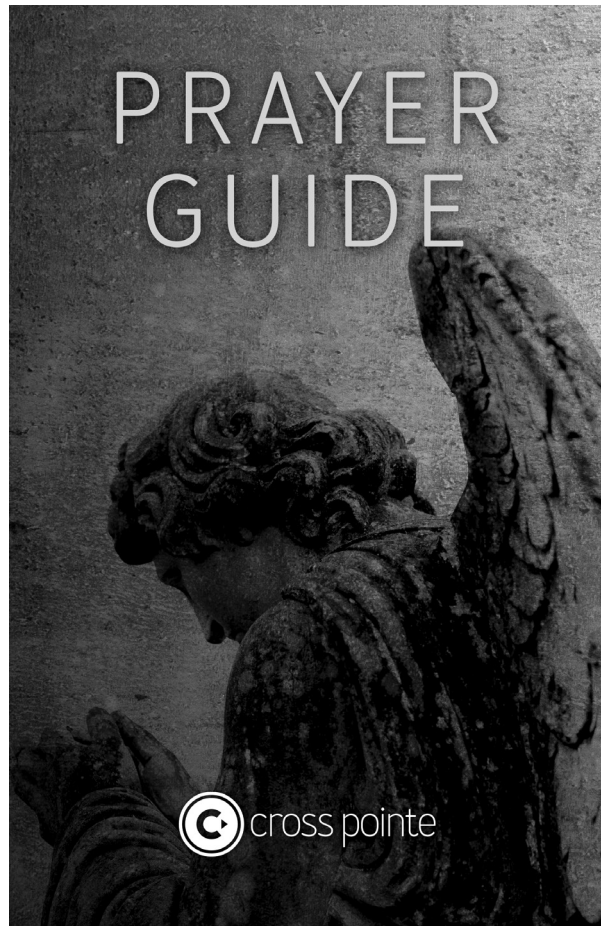
Date_____

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LEARNING TO PRAY

Visit us online to download our free Prayer Guide, that will teach you how to pray, and encourage you to keep a daily prayer journal. You'll also find more great prayer suggestions. You can get it for free at crosspointechurch.com/prayerfullife.



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