



NORTHWEST CHRISTIAN CHURCH

21 DAYS OF PRAYER AND FASTING

DIGITAL STUDY GUIDE



21 DAYS OF PRAYER AND FASTING - 2024

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The Cup - Day 1

As we kick off the first day of our 21 Days of Prayer and Fasting, let's look at the beginning of the passion narrative, The Last Supper. Jesus held up and passed the cup that represented His life that He would sacrifice for all who believe in Him. It's a sobering reminder as we kick off three weeks of fasting... in our American culture, we're quick to turn our "wants" into "needs." I pray this fast can help you, wherever you are in your relationship with Jesus, to recenter on Him.

Psalm 23:5-6

You prepare a table before me

in the presence of my enemies.

You anoint my head with oil;

my cup overflows.

Surely your goodness and love will follow me

all the days of my life,

and I will dwell in the house of the Lord

forever.

Prayer Focus

What are you "sacrificing" or fasting from over these 21 days? Why did you choose that? Pray that this fast will draw you closer to Jesus.

The Cup - Day 2

Jesus said He would not drink from the cup (the fruit of the vine) again until in paradise. It's sobering and humbling to think of Jesus, hours away from His grueling death, focusing on the big picture, the Kingdom of God. It's easy to get caught up in our current circumstances, anxieties, worries, and fears. Paul tells us in Philippians 4 to pray about everything, particularly in times of trouble and worry. Jesus modeled this for us. In His stress over His crucifixion that was to come, Jesus turned to prayer in the Garden and was able to focus on the bigger picture and the purpose to the pain He would endure.

Psalm 116:12-13

What shall I return to the Lord

for all His goodness to me?

I will lift up the cup of salvation

and call on the name of the Lord.

Prayer Focus

When you're tempted and challenged during your fast over these 21 days, what reminders can you set for yourself of the bigger picture and sacrifice you're making for God? Seek the Lord today and ask Him to help you when temptations come.

The Cup - Day 3

Today is the first Wednesday of our 21 Days of Prayer and Fasting. Whatever it is you might be fasting from over these 21 days, we're asking everyone to fast from food every Wednesday. We're calling it FEW: Fast Each Wednesday. This can be challenging and difficult, but we do it as a reminder that the Lord is the source of our strength. Our faith and strength is not in anything of this world, even food, but in the Lord.

John 4:34

Jesus said to them, "My food is to do the will of Him who sent Me and to finish His work."

Prayer Focus

Remember the practical definition David shared about fasting: giving up something for a period of time and replacing it with prayer. Spend time today in prayer to replace each meal time. Spend time in prayer, even if it's just a few moments, each time you have a craving. Remember Jesus' words in John 4:34 today.

The Cup - Day 4

After Jesus shared the cup of communion at the Last Supper with the disciples, Jesus was praying in the Garden before His arrest. He referenced another cup, praying, "Lord may this cup pass from Me." The cup Jesus refers to in the Garden is similar, yet vastly different, from the cup from the Last Supper. The cup in the Garden contains our sin, rebellion, and judgment. The cup Jesus held at the Last Supper contains our redemption, justification, and salvation. One cup has our shame and guilt, while the other has our cleanliness and healing.

John 3:16-17

For God so loved the world that He gave His one and only Son, that whoever believes in Him shall not perish but have eternal life. For God did not send His Son into the world to condemn the world, but to save the world through Him.

Prayer Focus

Do you have a difficult time living in redemption and forgiveness, or do you struggle to break away from guilt and shame? Is there a particular area of your life still causing you to carry guilt and shame? Give these things to the Lord today in your prayer time.

The Cup - Day 5

When Jesus took communion, the gospels say that Jesus told the disciples to do this in remembrance of Him. And that's exactly why we take communion every single Sunday. Jesus asked His followers to take it and remember, and the early church modeled that. I love the intimacy of taking communion. When you think about a worship service, it's easy to come and go through the motions, to sing along to the songs, to listen to the sermon. But when we take communion, we are participating in something significant and intimate. We're not only remembering something that happened a long time ago, we're acknowledging the truth about ourselves as Christ followers today - that it is by Jesus' broken body that we are made whole. That by Jesus' death, we have life. That by His resurrection, we live according to the power and authority of our risen Savior today.

1 Corinthians 1:18

The cross is foolishness to the world, but to those are being saved it is the power of God.

Prayer Focus

Take a few moments to spend in prayer. Pray that you will allow the Holy Spirit to lead in your life today. Pray that God would provide an opportunity to serve someone, to share or show someone God's love and power through you.

The Cup - Day 6

The Last Supper is a sacred, intimate moment with Jesus and His disciples before He would be arrested and crucified. We see after the Last Supper, in the Garden, how grueling the anticipation was, as Jesus prayed fervently. How powerful is it that of all the people Jesus could have been with, His mother Mary, or friends Mary, Martha, and Lazarus, He's spending it with His disciples? There's something to be said about taking sacred communion, the cup and the bread, together while in community with other believers. This is an observation made by the early church, as Acts 2:46-47 tells us, they took communion together whenever they gathered.

Hebrews 10:24-25

And let us consider how we may spur one another on toward love and good deeds, not giving up meeting together, as some are in the habit of doing, but encouraging one another - and all the more as you see the Day approaching.

Prayer Focus

Today is the Sabbath, a day of rest. Tomorrow is Sunday, a day where the church gathers together in worship and takes communion. As we gather tomorrow as a church, how can you encourage others? Pray for those people today.

The Cup - Day 7

Today is Sunday. As we finish out the week focusing on the cup and Lord's Supper, hopefully you take communion today! Jesus died two thousand years ago, and not one second passes on the clock that there aren't people somewhere in this world sitting down, breaking bread, drinking wine, and remembering Christ's death until He comes.

Psalm 103:2

Bless the Lord, O my soul! And forget not all of His benefits.

Prayer Focus

As you take communion today, take an extra moment before you take it. Reflect on what Jesus's sacrifice means for you, and how Jesus rescued you. Spend time today expressing your thankfulness and gratitude for what Jesus has done in your life

The Cross - Day 8

The cross is good news. The cross tells us that God is willing to do whatever is necessary to fix what sin has broken. The cross invites us to look within and all around and be heartbroken by the destruction that sin has caused this world. Sin leaves us feeling hopeless but the cross gives us grace and confidence to live with hope.

Galatians 6:14

As for me, may I never boast about anything except the cross of our Lord Jesus Christ. Because of that cross, my interest in this world has been crucified, and the world's interest in me has also died.

Prayer Focus

How is the cross good news for you today? Tell God what areas in your life need victory that only He can provide.

The Cross - Day 9

When Jesus voluntarily walked that long road with a cross on His back, He was communicating something to all of us. He was telling us that our needs were greater than His comforts. Jesus was fully human as well as divine and felt all the pain and all the anguish of that gruesome death. At any point He had the power to pull the plug on the operation. But He didn't do that. He walked that tough road and surrendered everything. It shouldn't come as a surprise to us when He asks us to commit fully to Him.

Matthew 16:24

Whoever wants to be My disciple must deny themselves and take up their cross and follow Me.

This is an ongoing identification that our life is dedicated to Christ, no matter what sort of discomforts or inconveniences it brings.

Prayer Focus

Thank God for going "ALL IN" for you. Be honest with God about what it takes for you to be all in for Him. Are there certain areas of your life in which you are hesitant to give up to follow Jesus?

The Cross - Day 10

Before Jesus hung on the cross, He stood trial. The crowd had a choice in the freedom of two men. They could let Jesus go free or they could let a criminal named Barabbas go free. The crowd chanted and yelled for the freedom of Barabbas. It's interesting that the very first person for whom Jesus dies is not you or me or even the thief on the cross. He dies first for a murderous terrorist. It's clear that Jesus knows we need a Savior, that's why He came to earth. But I think sometimes we think "we're not that bad". Scripture reminds us that no matter what wrong we've committed, we can't get there on our own.

Romans 3:23

For all have sinned and fallen short of the glory of God.

Prayer Focus

It's our instinct to want to earn what we get. What does grace mean to you? We might not see ourselves as a "Barabbas", but what are some ongoing sins in your life that need to be laid down at the foot of the cross?

The Cross - Day 11

Throughout the course of Jesus' betrayal, arrest, trial, beatings, and hanging on the cross, He said only a few words. I can't blame Him, there's not a lot to say. But finally, on the cross, we hear Him. The One who did not lift His voice before Pilate, cries out in despair, "My God, My God, why have you abandoned Me?" (Matthew 27:46) You can't blame Him for that reaction, but thankfully we have hope in scripture that we are never abandoned and never without hope.

2 Timothy 2:13

If we are unfaithful, He remains faithful, for He cannot deny who He is.

Prayer Focus

In an honest conversation with God, have you wanted to cry out to Him that you feel abandoned? In what ways does the reminder of God's faithfulness to you help your perspective in challenging moments?

The Cross - Day 12

God has a way of revealing His power and presence in amazing ways. For many, the challenges of life help us recognize a greater power of hope and freedom. For some, God uses others to demonstrate His grace and mercy. God can use any and every situation to demonstrate that He is Father and we are sons and daughters. After Jesus breathed His last breath on the cross, God moved in mighty ways. Immediately, the temple curtain was torn in two, the earth shook, tombs opened, bodies of the deceased raised. That's crazy! The Roman officer and other soldiers at the crucifixion said, "This man truly was the Son of God!" (Luke 15:39) Oftentimes we need God to show up in our unbelief, to demonstrate His power. Because of Jesus' death on the cross the one thing God desperately wanted to communicate was His love for us.

Romans 5:8

But God demonstrated His love for us in this, while we were still sinners, Christ died for us.

Prayer Focus

When has God shown up for you? There are many who need God to show up, and God is looking around at His people wondering who will represent Him. How can you demonstrate God's love to others in their unbelief? Spend time asking God who you need to love more.

The Cross - Day 13

It's the Sabbath. The day on which God rests from the work of creation has become the day in which He rests in the grave. I imagine the many disciples and followers of Jesus grieving, sharing stories, admitting confusion, and thinking of the events of the past days and even years. Who remained faithful to Jesus even in His death? There are many today that struggle to remain faithful to Jesus even while knowing of His resurrection! But on this day, that resurrection hasn't happened yet. And so they wait, but they're not sure what they're waiting for. They are deeply aware of the work that was started, but they can't help but wonder what the final product looks like. I'm familiar with this sort of impatience, anxiously wondering what the future holds, while forgetting what God has and is doing.

Psalm 27:14

Wait patiently for the Lord. Be brave and courageous. Yes, wait patiently for the Lord.

Prayer Focus

What is seemingly unfinished in your life? As you wait on God to complete what He started, what sort of posture are you taking? Is it sadness, rebellion, faithfulness, hope? How can you live out Psalm 27:14 when waiting for the Lord? Spend time praying about this today.

The Cross - Day 14

The journey of Jesus had to include the cross. Thankfully the story didn't end with a cross, we got an empty grave as well, but it had to include the cross. This Easter, we celebrate and participate in all the fun traditions, sing songs about the empty tomb, but we can't escape the fact that the cross was actually meant for us. But thankfully, we didn't have to endure the consequences of our rebellion. Jesus took that cup and went to that cross. Our life should be lived differently because of the freedom we have. How different? Well, we should live like Jesus lived.

Philippians 2:7

Instead, He gave up His divine privileges; He took the humble position of a slave and was born as a human being. When He appeared in human form, He humbled Himself in obedience to God and died a criminal's death on a cross.

Prayer Focus

Does the cross determine how you live your life? If you lived your life as a true apprentice to Jesus what would it look like to "give up your privileges", to take the position of a servant? Seek the Lord today and ask Him to help you take up your cross each day and live like a servant.

The Stone - Day 15

During this fasting season, it may be tempting to tell others what you're doing. Fasting is meant to be a very intimate encounter between us and our Creator. Going without something in order to seek after God can be a painful process. For some, it may be tempting to share with others that you are taking time to fast and pray. After all, how spiritual could one look on social media if one is portrayed as fasting for Jesus?

Jesus warned us against this temptation.

Matthew 6:16–18 NLT

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. But when you fast, comb your hair and wash your face. Then no one will notice that you are fasting, except your Father, who knows what you do in private. And your Father, who sees everything, will reward you.

Prayer Focus

Today may you experience the joy that comes when you share an intimate moment with your Creator. Just you and the resurrected Christ. No one else. Know that He sees you and wants to spend quality one on one time with just you.

The Stone - Day 16

In Isaiah 58, God shares His frustration toward His people who chose to fast, but were doing it for the wrong reasons.

Isaiah 58:2–3 NLT

They ask me to take action on their behalf, pretending they want to be near Me. “We have fasted before You!” they say. “Why aren’t You impressed? We have been very hard on ourselves, and You don’t even notice it!” “I will tell you why!” I respond. “It’s because you are fasting to please yourselves.”

Fasting is more than a religious ritual, it’s a genuine appeal to God to address injustice, help the oppressed, and care for those in need. In verse 6, God shares that He is not looking for mere piousness or a religious fervor, but action...

Isaiah 58:6–7 NLT

No, this is the kind of fasting I want: Free those who are wrongly imprisoned; lighten the burden of those who work for you. Let the oppressed go free, and remove the chains that bind people. Share your food with the hungry, and give shelter to the homeless. Give clothes to those who need them, and do not hide from relatives who need your help.

It seems in our times of prayer and fasting, God wants us also to act on what He is calling us to do. To live out our faith through our actions. When we do that, He promises to come closer.

Isaiah 58:8 NLT

Then your salvation will come like the dawn, and your wounds will quickly heal. Your Godliness will lead you forward, and the glory of the Lord will protect you from behind.

Prayer Focus

In light of the resurrected Christ and hope we have to share with others, use today’s fast as an opportunity to extend your love and compassion to others, fulfilling a true aspect of fasting.

The Stone - Day 17

The power of the resurrection not only brought victory over death, but it also brought victory over our old sinful nature. We don't have to live the way we've always lived.

Romans 6:12-14 NLT

Do not let sin control the way you live; do not give in to sinful desires. Do not let any part of your body become an instrument of evil to serve sin. Instead, give yourselves completely to God, for you were dead, but now you have new life. So use your whole body as an instrument to do what is right for the glory of God. Sin is no longer your master, for you no longer live under the requirements of the law. Instead, you live under the freedom of God's grace.

Prayer Focus

Just as Christ was raised from the dead, we too are called to walk in the newness of life. Use today's fast as a symbolic act of putting away the old self and embracing the resurrected life that Jesus offers. Are you struggling with a particular temptation? Allow His resurrection to bring forth renewal and transformation in that area of your life.

The Stone - Day 18

Throughout the Bible, we see examples of people fasting for different reasons. In one of the more gruesome accounts in the entire Bible, Judges 20 tells of a time when Israelites found themselves in a civil war against the tribe of Benjamin. After two days of battle where they suffered heavy casualties, this Israelite army faced a difficult decision: continue with this bloody conflict, or break it off.

Judges 20:26–28 NLT

*Then all the Israelites went up to Bethel and wept in the presence of the Lord and **fasted** until evening. They also brought burnt offerings and peace offerings to the Lord. The Israelites went up seeking direction from the Lord. (In those days the Ark of the Covenant of God was in Bethel, and Phinehas son of Eleazar and grandson of Aaron was the priest.) The Israelites asked the Lord, “Should we fight against our relatives from Benjamin again, or should we stop?”*

Prayer Focus

Perhaps you have found yourself at a crossroads where you are facing a difficult decision. Prayer and Fasting can be an opportunity for you to pause and intensely focus on God’s presence, seeking His counsel. In your time with God, ask the Holy Spirit to give you wisdom in making this decision. A phrase you may want to focus on is, “May Your will be done, not my own.”

The Stone - Day 19

Living out a Christian life can seem daunting. Even choosing to fast may be difficult because you may feel you don't have the power to follow through with it. But our walk is not to be accomplished on our own strength, but through the Holy Spirit living in and through our lives.

Romans 8:11 NLT

The Spirit of God, who raised Jesus from the dead, lives in you. And just as God raised Christ Jesus from the dead, He will give life to your mortal bodies by this same Spirit living within you.

Prayer Focus

Our living hope is anchored in the resurrection of Jesus Christ. As you fast, meditate on the power that comes from His resurrection. That the same power that raised Christ from the dead is at work in you, no matter what you're facing.

The Stone - Day 20

In Matthew 3, Jesus chooses to go all in by getting baptized. His next step was to enter public ministry. But instead of rushing into things, He went out to the desert and fasted. He wanted to make sure His heart and soul was inline with God before He went on to what was next in His life.

Matthew 4:1–2 NLT

Then Jesus was led by the Spirit into the wilderness to be tempted there by the devil. For forty days and forty nights He fasted and became very hungry.

This pattern of fasting before a spiritual step is also found in the book of Ezra.

Ezra 8:23 NLT

So we fasted and earnestly prayed that our God would take care of us, and He heard our prayer.

Prayer Focus

It can be tempting to act before taking time to pray and seek God's counsel. Is there a next step God is calling you? Is there something you would like God's blessing on in your own life? This season of fasting could be a great time to ask for God's guidance and blessing on what He would have you do next.

The Stone - Day 21

You made it to the final day of fasting. This may have been a trying journey, but may you be encouraged in the Spirit through your time with God.

Psalm 30:11-12 NLT

You have turned my mourning into joyful dancing.

*You have taken away my clothes of mourning and clothed me with joy,
that I might sing praises to You and not be silent.*

O Lord my God, I will give You thanks forever!

Prayer Focus

The sorrow of fasting is temporary, but the joy that comes in the morning is eternal. Today, as you conclude your fast, celebrate the joy of the resurrection. Rejoice in the victory of Christ, and let His joy be your strength as you continue to walk in the light of His resurrection.