

Season of Prayer and Fasting

(Fall 2020)

Focus: Revival in individual lives, families and Temple Baptist Church and Spiritual Awakening in our country. We are more divided than any time since the Civil War. In 1861, President Lincoln and both houses of Congress called for a day of prayer and fasting on the last Thursday of September.

“Therefore, I, Abraham Lincoln, President of the United States, do appoint the last Thursday in September next, as a day of humiliation, prayer and fasting for all the people of the nation. And I do earnestly recommend to all the People, and especially to all ministers and teachers of religion of all denominations, and to all heads of families, to observe and keep that day according to their several creeds and modes of worship, in all humility and with all religious solemnity, to the end that the united prayer of the nation may ascend to the Throne of Grace and bring down plentiful blessings upon our Country.”

I do not expect our President and both Houses of Congress to do the same in 2020. However, we as God’s people must humble ourselves and pray! If you saw the Presidential Debate this week, you know we desperately need prayer!

When: Each Monday from October 5 through December 7 (10 weeks). We will meet in person on Sunday, October 4, Monday, November 2 and Monday, December 7 (Zoom option). We will determine the time at our interest meeting Sunday, October 4. Encourage prayer partners to meet on the other Mondays.

Resources: Prayer and Fasting Guide by Randy Sims (included), Return to Me Says the Lord (Gregory Frizzell) is a 21-day devotional on repentance and Fresh Encounter (Richard and Henry Blackaby) is a 6 week series on revival and spiritual awakening. Prayer guide from Greg Frizzell (see below).

Order books here:

Return to Me <https://frizzellministries.org/return-to-me/>

Fresh Encounter https://www.christianbook.com/fresh-encounter-member-book-revised/henry-blackaby/9781415866870/pd/866870?en=google&event=SHOP&kw=bible-studies-and-curriculum-0-20%7C866870&p=1179710&dv=c&gclid=EA1aIQobChMI8qH2kNiR7AIVFovICh1-CQ-EEAQYASABEgLKQ_D_BwE

Cost of Books: I have several of these books: Return to Me (\$6) and Fresh Encounter (\$15). I will provide the books from our prayer ministry budget. Please consider donating that money or more to help international students at USM and WCU.

Preparation: Promote the season of prayer and fasting and hold an interest meeting on Sunday, October 4 at 5:00 pm in 5220 Café for those desiring to participate. (Zoom option available).

10 Specific Prayers for Revival & Spiritual Awakening

1. Ask God to bring deep conviction of sin, spiritual brokenness, a holy fear of God and genuine repentance among His people. There will be no revival without these elements and only God can produce them in His people. After all we cannot program or work up genuine brokenness and repentance. (2 Corinthians 7:10)

2. Pray for deep cleansing, genuine repentance, and spiritual power to engulf pastors and Christian leaders. Revival and spiritual awakening are extremely unlikely without a mighty move of God in pastors and Christian leaders. Renewed pastors are absolutely crucial to a move of God in our day! (Ephesians 6:14-20)

3. Pray for God to bestow spiritual hunger in His people and draw them to fervent intercession. God has to grant people the genuine faith and the fervent desire for prayer. With all our promotion and programming, we cannot “produce a genuine prayer movement.” (Philippians 2:13)

4. Pray that God will bring loving unity in our churches and a deep harmony between our churches. Many churches need healing among members and many churches need to stop competing jealously with other churches. (John 13:35)

5. Pray for God to fill His people with a passion to see people saved. (Only God can give a genuine burden for souls.) Until God’s people intensely pray for the lost and do aggressive soul winning revival will tarry. Be sure you are constantly praying for many lost people by name. (Romans 9:1-3)

6. Pray for God to give His people a passion for missions and starting churches. Great revivals produce an explosion of mission projects, new ministries and new church starts. Only God can grant a genuine passion for missions. (Matthew 28:19)

7. Pray that God will call thousands into ministry, missions and Christian service. Many churches are dying for lack of soul winners, teachers, and church workers. Furthermore, we can start only as many churches as we have church planters to start them. (Matthew 9:37)

8. Pray that God will pour out His Spirit like a mighty purifying flood. Ask God to purify our motives as we pray for revival. After all it is possible to pray for revival for selfish or ambitious reasons. Our motives must be solely for: (a) the glory of God, and (b) the increase of the kingdom of God. We must not pray for revival just to solve our own problems or make our church successful in the eyes of men. (James 4:2)

9. Pray for a mighty move of conviction and salvation upon communities of cultural influence. Some key examples are Hollywood actors and producers, government officials, educators, teachers, and college professors, news and media people, talk shows hosts, comedians, homosexual activists’ groups, and the music industry. (1 Timothy 2:1-2)

10. Specifically pray for God to pour out His Spirit in a fashion even greater than He did in America in 1858 and Wales in 1904. (Ten percent of Wales’ population was saved in five months!) Ask God for a modern day of Pentecost in the United States and Canada. (Mark 11:22-24; John 14:13-14.)

(Copied by permission from *A Powerful Prayer Life* by Gregory Frizzell)

Fasting Guide (Pastor Randy Sims)

What is fasting? Richard Foster defines it as, “The voluntary denial of a normal function for the sake of intense spiritual activity.” It is not just fasting from food but feasting on God and His word. Jesus told His disciples that He had food they did not know about (John 4:32, 34).

Does the Bible command fasting? Jesus said “**when you fast**”: – Matthew 6:16-18. He did not say, “If you fast.” This teaching is given along with teaching on giving to the needy and prayer. Are these issues optional for followers of Jesus? Jesus addressed questions on fasting from John’s disciples in Matthew 9:14-15. “The time will come when the bridegroom will be taken from them; **then they will fast.**” Jesus fasted and He seems to clearly expect His followers to fast.

Why would God instruct us to fast? All of God’s commandments are given for one of two reasons: 1) to provide for our good or 2) to protect from us from the bad. Fasting has many benefits such as physical wellbeing, mental focus and concentration, deliverance from bondage, increased effectiveness in prayer and witnessing, etc. Fasting is the ultimate way to deny self (first step of discipleship) and follow Christ.

Biblical fasting focuses on God, not man. There are some poor motives for fasting – bribing God to do what we want, weight loss, drawing attention to ourselves, etc. We should fast because God calls us to do so. Good motives are obedience, drawing closer to God, controlling your flesh, expressing dependence on God, and earnestly seeking God’s will. Fasting is also a natural response to a desperate situation (Nehemiah 1). The act of fasting does not seek to get God to do what we want Him to do against His will. It should not be undertaken to get Him onto our sheet of music but to get us onto His sheet of music.

Fasting in scripture is usually a private matter (Matthew 6). However, there was one public fast each year (the Day of Atonement in Leviticus 23:27) plus several specially called national fasts (2 Chronicles 20, Joel 2).

Believers through the ages have fasted. John Wesley would not ordain anyone to ministry who did not fast every Wednesday and Friday. This was based on teaching from the Jewish Didache. Charles Spurgeon said, “Our seasons of fasting and prayer at the Tabernacle have been high days indeed; never has Heaven’s gate stood wider; never have our hearts been nearer the central Glory.”

On the topic of fasting, John Piper writes: “The greatest enemy of hunger for God is not poison but apple pie....Do you have a hunger for God? If we don't feel strong desires for the manifestation of the glory of God, it is not because we have drunk deeply and are satisfied. It is because we have nibbled so long at the table of the world. Our soul is stuffed with small things, and there is no room for the great. If we are full of what the world offers, then perhaps a fast might express, or even increase, our soul's appetite for God. Between the dangers of self-denial and self-indulgence is the path of pleasant pain called fasting.” Piper says God’s greatest adversaries are His good gifts to us: piece of land, yoke of oxen, wife (Luke 14:18-20).

In Isaiah 1, we read how God hates ritual worship. Please do not just go through the motions! In Isaiah 58, God explains what true fasting really is. We get so focused on hearing God and obeying God we forget temporarily about eating. You have done it with work, hanging out with friends, watching a game, shopping, etc.

Practical Considerations:

- If you have never fasted before, please consult your physician. If you are pregnant or have diabetes or heart problems, you should not fast from food. You can fast from other things: certain types of food only, media, etc.
- Start with fasting from one meal. Use this time to pray and meditate on a portion of God's word. You may then move to 24-hour (2 meals) fasts. Then 36 hours (3 meals). Many choose to start their fast a sundown (this was the beginning of the Jewish day). However, there is no wrong time to start your fast.
- If you fast for longer periods of time, it is helpful to detox yourself from caffeine and to eat smaller portions of raw foods leading up to your fast.
- I drink only water or fruit juice (such as grape, peach, pineapple, grapefruit, V8 Splash, etc. Avoid juice with high acid content such as orange and tomato). Drink 8-12 ounces 4 or 5 times per day. Consume water throughout the day.
- Break your fast by eating fresh fruits and vegetables and easy-to-digest foods (yogurt, baked potatoes, etc. for a few days following a week-long fast. I do not eat meat until my digestive system is functioning normally again (usually 3 days).
- During your fast you will notice everything about your smelling worse (breath, sweat, and other bodily functions). I am no medical doctor, but I have been told this is because your body is ridding itself of unhealthy toxins that have built up in your system.
- Do not chew gum. The chewing motion tells your stomach food is coming. The body prepares your stomach to digest food. When the food does not come, it can be harmful to your digestive system.
- Take time to rest. You will not have as much stamina as you normally have when eating. Do not do heavy workouts or strenuous physical activity.
- You may feel a bit weak or dizzy. Slow down and try not to make sudden movements.
- The hunger pains are usually worse between days 2 and 4.
- Coming off your fast, plan to adopt healthier exercise routines and eating habits. Fasting reminds us that our bodies are temples of the Holy Spirit and should be cared for as such. Fasting has greatly increased my appreciation for food.
- I like to meditate on one scripture passage or one topic during my fast. I also recommend keeping a journal of your times of fasting.
- Caution: you will lose weight when you fast for several days. However, the weight will quickly return unless you change your habits after you fast.
- Family considerations: I do not fast on special family days (Christmas, birthdays, Mother's Day, etc.). There are times to fast and times to feast! At times I will pull aside to pray and at other times I will visit with my family while they are eating.
- How do you handle people offering you food? "No thank you." "I'm not eating today."
- Should we not tell people we are fasting? How would we know anything about fasting unless someone told us? I think this goes back to motive. We do not talk about it to draw attention to ourselves but we can share what we have learned through our experiences.

The Power of Prayer and Fasting: God's Gateway to Spiritual Breakthroughs by Ronnie Floyd is a great and practical resource on fasting.