

15 DAY PRAYER & FASTING

OUR VISION IS TO SEE THE WORLD AWAKEN TO THE
WONDER OF GOD
AND HIS
TRANSCULTURAL CHURCH.

2023



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INTRODUCTION

There are countless fasting schemes to help promote fitness and wellness. That kind of fasting is an act of your personal will. Setting a law for yourself and obeying that law. The hope is that you will then achieve some health benefit if you abide by that self-imposition.

This a helpful use for fasting but it is not Christian fasting. As we look to God's first people in the Old Testament we can learn many good things about fasting. Though in some way or another, their fasting was always done according to the Law or demands of God.

For each of us who are in Christ, our fasting should be centred on Him. Fasting as a Christ-centred discipline is a Gospel gift.

So when should we use this gift of fasting? Here are several opportunities to fast:

- [1] When we mourn (or actively share in the mourning of others),
- [2] when we know we need to repent or ask for forgiveness but our pride is in the way,
- [3] when a church needs to make a corporate decision or a minister of the Word needs to consider a change of ministry,
- [4] as help in removing our distractions from prayer and reading of scripture and
- [5] fasting to deepen our dependence on God.

So why suggest that we do it as a church? The truth is that each of us likely fits into one of the above categories. Either you are mourning a loss or change or someone else at Rooted is. Each of us allows sin to hinder our relationship with God and with others whom we love. Rooted, like all churches, needs those who call it home to pray for the life of the church and its health. All of us reach for the simple comforts of this World in place of the comfort promised to us by Jesus. And we all need to learn how to rest in and rely upon Jesus more and more every day.

So what will fasting do? It will make you hungry. More than that though we pray together as a church that we will hunger and thirst more for who Jesus is for us. And we pray that in every pain and triumph we will know he is right there with us. May these few days of discomfort lead us to praise God in every circumstance and worship him in Spirit and in Truth.

HOW TO BEGIN FASTING

When the Bible speaks of fasting it means avoiding food, sometimes from water as well.

There are other things that you can abstain from. The Apostle Paul tells us that if something is getting in the way we can set it aside for a time to focus our life back on Christ (1 Corinthians 7:5). If you know you need to abstain from phones, social media, or Netflix during this time as well then you should do it (add whatever you must to this list.) There is no better time to experience the work of God the Holy Spirit. Your defenses will be down and distractions will be laid aside. There is no better time than now.

When fasting from food be wise and know your limits. Here are a few suggestions:

- On the first day of the fast skip a single meal. Dedicate the time usually spent preparing, eating, and tidying up to reading scripture and prayer.
- On the second day skip two meals, read, and pray.
- If you choose to fast for a whole day, every other day, every second day, or every third is up to you.
- Set the days and the amount of time you want to dedicate to fasting, reading, and prayer then be sure to hold to it. Trust that God will continue to provide his strength for you.
- Drink plenty of water. Lean on brothers and sisters in Christ who are also fasting.

When you break your fast be sure to feast. The best way to do this is to feast with others. Rejoin your family or household and enjoy food. You will be thankful for it.

As an example, if you fasted during a morning and afternoon meal invite someone else from Rooted to share in a meal in the evening. This would also be a great opportunity to share in a good meal with your “One More” or several one more’s.

Then be sure to reflect upon your day; what you have read and where you have seen God promise himself to you in Christ.

If you are unsure where to begin what follows are a series of daily readings and prayers to help you focus your attention.

JANUARY 15

Isn’t everything you have and everything you are sheer gifts from God? So what’s the point of all this comparing and competing? You already have all you need.

1 Corinthians 4:7 (The Message)

Let’s start by placing Jesus at the centre of what we begin today. One way to do that is to acknowledge that everything is a good gift from Jesus’ hands to yours. So yes, good food is a good gift. Fasting is also a gift.

The name of Jesus placed on you, salvation handed over, brothers and sisters adopted into the same family with you, new life, each breath, each pain and sorrow given purpose, the source of every new joy revealed...and this could go on forever.

Everything you have has been gifted to you and this is good news because not only is the competition over with your neighbour but you can also hold all things loosely. No more death grips on temporary things. Instead, you have warm hands able to give generously to those around you who are in need. Whether that means stuff, a kind word of encouragement, strong arms to pick up and carry someone through a struggle, or the Good News about Jesus from your lips to their ears. You have so much to give.

When we deprive ourselves of something small it is not a sacrifice but the realisation that we have so much and it is all a gift. Praise God.

Father, you give every good thing. Because you sent your only begotten Son, we can be your sons and daughters. Grant that we would listen to your Son and praise him. In Jesus's name, by the Spirit we pray. Amen.

(Prayer by Brandon D. Smith)

JANUARY 16

Blessed are those who hunger and thirst for righteousness, for they will be satisfied.
Matthew 5:6

What does it take to be truly hungry? What does it mean to be truly thirsty? Poverty can take away the ability to have regular sustenance. A shortness of time can steal away a meal or two. But real hunger, real thirst, only famine and drought can lead to that.

Jesus knew what he was saying when he spoke to that waiting crowd even if we get a little confused about it today. "You are safe and saved if you know that you have no righteousness of your own. If you know you are living in a time of famine and drought. If you know that then you know there is only one place to get it. In me, you will be satisfied."

When we come to the end of ourselves and we admit that we need help. When we understand that we need the opposite of what we have and deserve. This is when the Word of God himself, Jesus, meets us and tells us what satisfies that need. He does. He is our righteousness (1 Corinthians 1:30-31). We hunger and thirst no more.

Gracious God, give us more and more of Jesus. Let us see him in all that we do. By your Spirit guide us always to your Word which is a feast of your promises. Fill us with righteousness. May we not be so quickly satisfied by the weak things of this world. Father, Son, and Holy Spirit we pray. Amen.



JANUARY 17

Therefore, brothers and sisters, in view of the mercies of God, I urge you to present your bodies as a living sacrifice, holy and pleasing to God; this is your true worship. Do not be conformed to this age, but be transformed by the renewing of your mind, so that you may discern what is the good, pleasing, and completed will of God.

Romans 12:1-2

God does not need you to sacrifice your health, fitness, or less-than-fitness by fasting. Fasting would eventually lead to death. You are called to be a "living sacrifice". How does this work? First, by not allowing the World to mould you into the person it wants you to be. Us Old Adam (and Eve) Sinners easily believe that all we need to do is sacrifice the person next to us to get to where we want to be.

Instead, we need to have our minds repented, turned around, renewed, each day. How does this happen? Mystically? By introspection? No. By being rooted in God's Word. By trusting in God and taking our concerns to him in prayer.

Dear Lord, Renew our minds. Turn us around from the ways of this World and grant that we will always be shaped more and more into the likeness of your Son, our Saviour. Amen.

JANUARY 18

(Read Ephesians 2:1-10)

We are his workmanship, created in Christ Jesus for good works, which God prepared beforehand, that we should walk in them.

Ephesians 2:10

There are countless good things that you can do every day. There are so many good things that you would not be able to accomplish them all even if your every breath was dedicated to completing the list.

Many people waste time wondering what they should do as a Christian. Before you knew what salvation was God already had a plan laid out for you and that includes good work that you could be busy doing, "walk in".

Helping someone carry their bags from the shop. Doing your job well. Serving your spouse or roommate a cup of tea. The opportunities are endless. But we only see them as real opportunities when we understand each of these has been given to us by God.

When we are filled up with the promises of God then we can know we have been prepared for whatever comes our way. Read his Word and you will know what awaits you each day.

Blessed Lord, you fill my life with good things (Psalm 103:5) so that I will be ready for every good work you have prepared for me to walk in. Thank you. Amen.



JANUARY 19

(Read Psalm 70)

Let all who seek you rejoice and be glad in you;
let those who love your salvation
continually say, "God is great!"

Psalm 70:4

What is the first thing you run to in a time of need? When the walls are closing in around you where do you find comfort?

In Psalm 70 David is waiting for the tables to turn. He is lamenting the fact that his enemies are winning. And when they are not winning they are mocking him and waiting for his failure.

Maybe you do not have a nameable enemy. Or maybe you do and you know their names all to well. Right now whether it is a person, yourself, or our true enemy

Great God, as we listen and wait for you, as we set aside a little bodily comfort, fill our hearts with joy and gladness. Teach us to love the salvation you have earned for us. May we never be short of praise. Amen.

JANUARY 20

(Read Psalm 34)

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I will bless the LORD at all times;
his praise shall continually be in my mouth.

Psalm 34:1

How can we taste and see that the Lord is good. The only way we can bless the Lord at all times and continually praise him is to know what he has done for us. See how David recounts the Lord's work. Follow his lead.

Share that Good News with with someone else.

Lord, I often fill my mouth so full that there is no space for praise to come out. My head and heart so full of things of this world that worship comes as a last resort. Gracious giver of life, please turn my heart and head toward your Word. Turn my hands toward my neighbour in love. Open my mouth for praises to You. Amen.

JANUARY 21

(Read Psalm 23 and John 10:1-18)

The LORD is my shepherd; I shall not want.

Psalm 23:1

"I am the good shepherd. I know my own, and my own know me."

John 10:14

Feed us and lead us Good Shepherd. This is a good thing to ask of Jesus. In fact it is something that he declared he wants to do for us. It is one of his vocations on our behalf. His work for our good and his glory. When you are unsure where you belong or if you have value. If you are a bit lost and wondering if any of the things you have been called to make sense. First, know that this is normal. Second, know that you do not need to work it all out on your own. Jesus has placed you in His Church so that others can share in your struggles and you in theirs.

You can work tirelessly in all the things that you have been called to and you can still slow down to be fed and led by our shepherd through his Word. Whether it comes by way of the written text, the words of a brother or sister in Christ, a preacher, or in baptism and the Lord's Supper. You are in a rich pasture and a cool stream.

(Have a listen to "Slow Me Down" a song by The Porter's Gate)

Heavenly Father, you care for us like a good shepherd. You give us all that we need though we often demand more. We turn a blind eye to your blessings. Please continue to feed us. Lead as you have faithfully done from the beginning. Turn our hearts so that we may turn our praise always to our Saviour who lives and reigns with you and the Holy Spirit, One God now and forever, Amen.

JANUARY 22

(Read Psalm 139)

Search me, O God, and know my heart;
test me and know my anxious thoughts.
Point out anything in me that offends you,
and lead me along the path of everlasting life.

Psalm 139:23-24 (ESV)

Lord, you know each of us. Each thing that we do, we think, we ignore, and we desire. You see us and know us. It is not comfortable to be known because rejection is so easy and so permanent. Father, you have built eternity into us. You have also built into us a knowledge that justice will one day be demanded. I can try to hide. I can look up and see that you I am no longer where I should be. But in you I am always found. There is no hiding from you because you are everywhere. You are grace and mercy Lord. You are love. Wherever you are there is forgiveness and salvation. Guide me down the road that leads to life forever with you. "Purify my heart. Cleanse my mind. Sanctify my soul. Renew my strength as I sojourn on Your path, safe in the knowledge that I am known by You. Amen.

Our Father in Heaven,

Hallowed be Your Name

Your Kingdom Come

You Will be Done

On Earth as it is in Heaven.

Give us today our daily bread

And forgive our sins

As we forgive those who sin against us.

Lead us not into temptation

But Deliver us from Evil (Luke 11:2-4; Matthew 6:9-13) For Yours is the Kingdom, Power, and Glory

Now and Forever, Amen. (1 Chronicles 29:11-13)

Give us today our daily bread.

What does this mean? God certainly gives daily bread to everyone without our prayers, even to all evil people, but we pray in this petition that God would lead us to realise this and to receive our daily bread with thanksgiving.

What is meant by daily bread? Daily bread includes everything that has to do with the support and needs of the body, such as food, drink, clothing, shoes, house, home, land, animals, money, goods, a devout husband or wife, devout children, devout workers, devout and faithful rulers, good government, good weather, peace, health, self-control, good reputation, good friends, faithful neighbours, and the like.

(Luther's Small Catechism)

“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. 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.”

Matthew 6:16-18 (CSB)

“Oh great, a reward for fasting, why didn’t we hear about this before now?”

Good question. It is not a trick though. Twice more in Matthew 6 Jesus says something about being rewarded by God. When giving to the needy and when praying as well, when that is done without advertising it Jesus says that we will be rewarded. How? Jesus tells us that if we go about trying to get praise from people and God we will spoil the whole thing. Instead, we should fast, pray, and give to those in need knowing that that is exactly what God hopes for us. Because he desires this for us he will grow us through each of those things. However, if we actively seek to be better than our neighbours and demand praise for it. Then whatever reward we get in the here and now...that’s it. No other promises remain for us.

Help us to bear easily whatever suffering we face, and reap in this world the benefits of humility.

“Learn from me,” you said, “for I am gentle and humble in heart, and you will find rest for your souls” (Matthew 11:29).

O Lord, grant me humility, compassion toward others, and obedience.

To you be glory and might forever and ever, amen.

(Prayer by John Chrysostom)

JANUARY 25

For we know that if our earthly tent we live in is destroyed, we have a building from God, an eternal dwelling in the heavens, not made with hands. Indeed, we groan in this tent, desiring to put on our heavenly dwelling, since, when we are clothed, we will not be found naked. Indeed, we groan while we are in this tent, burdened as we are, because we do not want to be unclothed but clothed, so that mortality may be swallowed up by life. Now the one who prepared us for this very purpose is God, who gave us the Spirit as a down payment.

So we are always confident and know that while we are at home in the body we are away from the Lord. For we walk by faith, not by sight. In fact, we are confident, and we would prefer to be away from the body and at home with the Lord. Therefore, whether we are at home or away, we make it our aim to be pleasing to him.

2 Corinthians 5:1-9 (CSB)

If you are fasting at this point you may have gotten used to the process. At least a little. But you still are experiencing the weakness of your own body and your dependence on things outside yourself. That is everything inside of you telling you that you await a day when you are not weak. If you are abstaining from something else the temptation to run back to it is there in the back of your mind. It will not always be this way.

God who sent His Son to Save,
from Guilt and Darkness and the Grave,
is gracious to you – he is blessing and renewing you,
from this Day until the day our faith is made sight.

JANUARY 26

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(Read Mark 6:30–44)

When Jesus invites you to his table there is no need to think that there may not be enough for you. In our world everything is about scarcity. Even if there is too much “stuff”. Because you will never have enough money to get all that stuff. If you did you would lose it little by little to time, moth, and rust. There will be scarcity one way or another. But not at Christ’s table, where you are welcome.

On this mountain the LORD of hosts will make for all peoples
a feast of rich food, a feast of well-aged wine,
of rich food full of marrow, of aged wine well refined.
And he will swallow up on this mountain
the covering that is cast over all peoples,
the veil that is spread over all nations.

He will swallow up death forever;
and the Lord GOD will wipe away tears from all faces,
and the reproach of his people
he will take away from all the earth,
for the LORD has spoken.

Isaiah 25:6–8 (ESV)

Lord God, heavenly Father, in the wilderness your Son fed over five thousand people with five loaves and two fish. Graciously remain with us and bless us. Preserve us from greed and the cares of this life that we may seek first your kingdom and your righteousness and in all things remember your Fatherly goodness; through your Son, our Lord Jesus Christ, who lives and reigns with you and the Holy Spirit, one true God, now and forever. Amen.

(Prayer by Veit Dietrich)



JANUARY 27

“Granted that most of us know some individuals who are remarkable prayer warriors, is it not nevertheless true that by and large we are better at organizing than agonizing? Better at administering than interceding? Better at fellowship than fasting? Better at entertainment than worship? Better at theological articulation than spiritual adoration? Better—God help us!—at preaching than at praying?”

(D.A. Carson, *A Call to Spiritual Reformation*)

Return to me with all your heart, with fasting and weeping, and mourning; rend your hearts and not your garments. Return to the Lord, your God, for he is gracious and merciful, slow to anger and abounding in steadfast love.

Joel 2:12–13 (ESV)

Jesus told Satan that is it not by bread alone that we live but by every word that comes from the mouth of God (Matthew 4:4). The Apostle Paul tells us that in Jesus, the Word, we live, move, and have our being (Acts 17:28).

This is factually true and we probably would say that we know it. But knowledge alone and outside appearances are not worth that much. Jesus however is worth that much. He is gracious and merciful, slow to anger and abounding in steadfast love as he showed on the Cross.

Heavenly Father, constantly renew us, turn us around and point us in the direction of your Son. By your Holy Spirit we pray that we would not get caught up in the outward appearance of “Christian-ness” but that would worship you always for who you are in Spirit and Truth. Father, Son, and Holy Spirit we pray, Amen.

A Benediction: A Good Word to End On

The Lord has blessed you and he is keeping you;

The Lord has made his face to shine upon you in Christ,
making you right and righteous,
taking your judgement upon himself.

These last two weeks the Lord has given you
all that you have needed and more.

He has made you at peace with himself.

Feast with those who need to hear
about the loving provision of God.

Keep Christ at the centre of your meals, homes, and hearts.

Tell your neighbours the Good News about Jesus for them.

For this reason I kneel before the Father from whom every family in heaven and on earth is named. I pray that he may grant you, according to the riches of his glory, to be strengthened with power in your inner being through his Spirit, and that Christ may dwell in your hearts through faith. I pray that you, being rooted and firmly established in love, may be able to comprehend with all the saints what is the length and width, height and depth of God's love, and to know Christ's love that surpasses knowledge, so that you may be filled with all the fullness of God.

Now to him who is able to do above and beyond all that we ask or think according to the power that works in us— to him be glory in the church and in Christ Jesus to all generations, forever and ever. Amen.

Ephesians 3:14–21(CSB)

