



21 DAYS PRAYER & FASTING

THE TABLE

PRAYER GUIDE

THE TABLE

WELCOME!

Starting Sunday, February 1st, we're stepping into a special 21-day journey of prayer together. This is more than just a calendar event; it's a **powerful opportunity to learn the 'art of waiting' and to anchor our lives in Him**. We'll wrap up on Vision Sunday, February 22nd, having established **rhythms of devotion** that will sustain us all year long. Let's intentionally step away from the noise, fix our gaze on **Jesus** and see what He has in store for us!

This year, our focus is **COMMUNITY: AT THE TABLE**.

We are living in a moment where we've never been more 'connected' digitally, yet so many have never felt more alone. We've confused connectivity with intimacy, trading face-to-face time around the table of community for a screen. This has left a deep, soul-level ache in all of us to be truly seen, to be fully known, and to finally find our place in a family.

Here's the tension. We crave belonging, yet we're also terrified of the messiness of it. We carry these walls of protection because we're scared that if we actually open up and commit, we might get rejected or lose our sense of control. But church, the life Jesus invites us into, that abundant, wholehearted life, isn't found in isolation. It's found right on the other side of our fear, in the warmth of a community that looks like the heart of the Father.

Sunday morning is a great start, but true belonging happens beyond the service. You can't find "family" just by sitting in a row; you find it around a table. The early church understood that the center of gravity for their faith wasn't just a building or a sermon, it was the table. They practiced viewing one another not as strangers, but as family. They called their shared meals the Agape Feast (the Love Feast).

We too need a place and a small community where we can be ourselves, share a meal, and stick together when life gets messy.

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Living in community is not easy, and it won't just "happen" in our busy, disconnected world. It will require practice, but when we make the move and learn to share our real lives, that's where transformation actually begins.

We will be learning more about this practice of COMMUNITY and THE TABLE and how to live life in community during our service on Sunday 1st. Be sure to be there in the room.

Our Prayer For You

Kristen and I, along with our staff and leadership team are praying for you and believing with you. We have confidence that God hears our prayers and that **He is willing and able to be strong on your behalf, bringing breakthrough and freedom into your life this year.**

We release favour and blessing upon your life as we begin these 21 days together and pray the Apostle Paul's prayer over your life. That Christ would dwell in your hearts and that you, being established in love may have power, together with all the Lord's holy people, to grasp how wide and long and high and deep is the love of Christ.

Blessings,
Aaron & Kristen Williamson

Getting Started

Over the next 21 days, we are going to build a rule of life together by engaging in practices that empower us to live open, honest and vulnerable in community. Practices like active listening and curiosity, that will keep our eyes open, turn us towards one another, connect us to God's heart for one another and inspire those around us to do the same.

For those that need a refresher a rule of life is a schedule, set of practices and relational rhythms that help us create space in our busy world for us to be with Jesus, become like Jesus, and do what Jesus did—to live “to the full” in his kingdom, and align our deepest passions and priorities with Jesus’ vision for life.

A rule of life is all about relationships with God, ourselves and others. It helps us to turn the ideas of life in the kingdom into reality. To get the words and vision of Jesus from our mind and into our heart.

You can learn more about what a Rule of Life is from this teaching on what a rule of life is all about.

As we begin our 21 days together, the best way for you to follow along is to sign up to receive our daily devotions by visiting dayspring.com.au/21-days.

Prayer & Fasting Guide

This guide will set out for you how we as a church are going to pray and fast together over these 21 days. We would encourage you to read through this guide, watch Ps Aaron's message from Sunday 2nd February (available on youtube) and then sign up to get the weekly devotional guides emailed to you.

This time together over the next 21 days is about surrender. It is about allowing God to make our hearts tender and sensitive to His word and His way. It is about developing a lifestyle of prayer. Prayer is most effective when it moves beyond something we do every now and then and becomes a lifestyle we cultivate. Jesus is our example of how to live a lifestyle of prayer.

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

There are 3 things we learn from the life of Jesus;

1. FIND A TIME

Jesus got up early to pray. Set aside time whether it's morning, lunch or in the evening and make an appointment with God. Then be faithful and keep it.

2. FIND A PLACE

Jesus got away from everything else and went to a certain place to pray. He separated Himself from everyone and everything to spend time with the Father. Find your own place away from distractions, away from your phone and devices where you are free to set your whole heart and attention on hearing and receiving from your Father. them come to Salvation.

Prayer & Fasting Guide

3. FIND A WAY

When Jesus taught the disciples to pray, He gave them an outline, a way to come before the Father. The Psalms teach us that we enter His courts with praise. While we don't want to get religious and rigid in our approach to prayer, there are ways in which the bible teaches us to approach our time of prayer. These are useful in teaching our hearts and minds to focus on Him and tune in to His voice.

As you approach our time together over the next 21 days we would encourage you to first take some time to think through the following;

1. What areas in your life are you needing breakthrough in? Write them down.

Over the next 21 days ask God to show you;

- What breakthrough looks like for you in this area, and
- How can you be active in allowing Him to work in these areas

Remember we co-labour with God. Our prayer life is backed up by our faith walk.

2. Write down specific things you are believing for this year. Things pertaining to your own life, but also things that you are believing for your family, your neighbourhood, your city and for our nation.
3. Identify 3 people you are going to pray for to see them come to Salvation.

What to Pray

During 21 days we encourage you to continue our “Sow the Summer” prayer focus. It doesn't require much time, just sow 5 minutes or sow praying into each of these areas throughout the week.

Sunday morning: Pray for the service and those attending. For salvations, for miracles, for encounters with Jesus that brings greater freedom.

Monday: Pray that what was released and sown on Sunday would go deep and bear fruit.

Tuesday: Pray for our pastors and leaders.

Wednesday: Pray for salvations.

Thursday: Pray for our households, marriages, families and table communities.

Friday: Pray for the various ministries at Dayspring.

Saturday: Pray for our city and nation.

How to Pray

Here are some ideas about how you might spend your time in prayer. You could focus on one practice or try each one. A common approach is to break our day into three segments that we start with prayer. One idea might be to try Lectio Divina in the morning, the Lord's prayer at midday and then the prayer of Examen at night.

LECTIO DIVINA

Eugene Peterson writes: “Lectio divina is a way of reading the Scriptures that is congruent with the way the Scriptures serve the Christian community as a witness to God's revelation of himself to us. It is the wise guidance developed through the centuries of devout Bible reading to discipline us, the readers of Scripture, into appropriate ways of understanding and receiving this text so that it is formative for the way we live our lives, not merely making an impression on our minds or feelings. It intends the reading of Scripture to be a permeation of our lives by the revelation of God.”

There are **four** basic parts to the process, involving four readings of the same passage. Here's an example of how you might lead a group or proceed yourself through lectio divina:

Read: Prepare yourself to hear God's Word. When you read the words the first time, pay attention to what's being said in a broad way. Make yourself comfortable and open yourself to God. Pay attention to the words you hear. What stands out to you? Notice any thoughts, pictures, memories or experiences that arise in your imagination. After you read, sit in silence and allow the words to resonate within you.

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Reflect: Meditate on what stood out to you. When preparing to read the passage a second time, give yourself permission to reflect on the words. What thoughts naturally arise? What's the response of your heart? After reading, sit in silence and roll over the words, thoughts and feelings inside you.

Respond: Offer your thoughts, emotions and sensations back to God. With this third reading, let the words of the text enter into your imagination in such a way that they prompt some kind of response. Let the ways that the reading has touched your heart and mind spawn a prayer or emotion back to God. Let what is in you be expressed, whatever it may be.

Remain: Wait before God in his presence. With this final reading, allow yourself to sit with the words as if you are sitting with a best friend. Then imagine that you are sitting in stillness with God. Rest in God and be with him. Is something emerging from this time with God that you sense you need to try out? What action steps or experiments might be called for? Reading the Bible this way might be different for you and it might feel weird to read the same verse four times followed by a period of silence. But often God challenges us to do something different so that the Spirit can do something different in us. If you feel a bit strange about it, don't give up, it is quite normal. The process might lead you to some new ways of hearing God's voice and direction.

Your Turn: Set aside about 20 minutes when you can be quiet and alone. Choose a specific passage to read. The passage from Colossians 3 will work well, John 14, 15, 16 & 17 are also great chapters of scripture to pray through. Those who practice lectio divina often find that they use the same verse over a period of days, and each day God speaks in a new way. Try it out and see what happens.

PRAYER OF EXAMEN

Before you go to bed at night, consider a classic spiritual practice called "The Prayer of Examen," developed by Ignatius Loyola (1491-1556). It is a prayerful reflection of your experience with Jesus over a specific time period. The goal is simple -- increased awareness and attentiveness to the presence of God in your daily life.

There are many different ways to pray 'The Examen', but here it is in five, easy to remember steps:

1. Become aware of God's presence - take some time to remember that God is present with us in our everyday lives. He has been near to you and with you throughout the events of your day. Invite the Holy Spirit.
2. Review the day with gratitude - what are you thankful for? What were the gifts of the day? What did you receive from others? What did you give to others? How has God been at work? Where was He in conversation, in the actions of others, in the events of the day, in nature? Was He speaking?

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3. Pay attention to your emotions – St. Ignatius emphasised how our emotions can point to the presence of God. Reflect upon how you felt throughout your day. What might God be saying to you through these emotions? Perhaps there's an area where you need to seek forgiveness. Maybe you were frustrated by an unwanted interruption or responded in anger? Perhaps you resisted God's nudging to offer someone help. Is there a way you could reach out to that person today?
4. Choose one thing from the day and pray for it – maybe there's something that particularly stands out to you? It may be a conversation, an event or an emotion. Respond to it in prayer.
5. Look forward to tomorrow – how do you want to live differently? How can you become more aware of God's presence?

Fasting & Abstaining

Biblical fasting is refraining from food for a spiritual purpose. It is where we starve the "flesh" and "feed" "the Spirit. Fasting is an ancient Christian discipline to break the power of the flesh in our life – our desires, sins, and cravings – and to feed on the Holy Spirit. Fasting is the grace practice of engaging your entire person (not just your mind) in prayer. Fasting fosters an internal intimacy, a quiet space, in which God's voice has more room.

In our fast-paced, consumer-driven and media-saturated world often a more effective way of entering into a time of prayer is to replace the fasting of food with the abstaining of TV and/or social media.

Our primary focus in fasting or abstaining is to slow down and create space to fix our eyes on Jesus and to listen to the voice and direction of God.

Fasting helps us to realise the things that control us, things that have worked to disorder our desires and may have become idols. The purpose of fasting is to redirect our hunger towards God and humble ourselves before God & make time for intensified prayer and focus.

We fast because it helps to give us balance in life. It makes us more keenly sensitive to the whole of life so that we're not so obsessed by our consumer mentality. – Richard J. Foster

SOME SPIRITUAL REASONS & BENEFITS OF FASTING

- To truly humble ourselves before God (Ezra 8:21; James 4:8-10; 2 Chronicles. 7:14)
- To learn how to depend on God for strength (Mathew 17:21; Isaiah 40:31)
- To ask for supernatural intervention from God (2 Samuel 12:16; Acts 14:23)
- To help us hear & respond better to the Spirit of God (Luke 4:1; Ephesians 6:18-19)
- To obtain supernatural protection and provision (Ezra 8:21-23)
- To make more time for prayer in order to get closer to God. (Matthew 6:16; Mark 2:20)

"SO I TURNED MY ATTENTION TO THE LORD GOD TO SEEK HIM BY PRAYER AND PETITIONS, WITH FASTING..." DANIEL 9:3

Fasting & Abstaining

HOW TO FAST

Fasting was a practice used by early disciples of Jesus as a set rhythm in their everyday lives, fasting twice a week until sundown on Wednesdays and Fridays, as well as the 40 days of Lent. Just like any other practice, such as reading scripture and prayer, fasting was simply one of the things that practising Christians did. We would encourage you to see how this practice could transfer beyond these 21 days, and into your everyday life of following Jesus.

However you engage with this practice, whether it's abstaining or fasting, remember that the ultimate goal of fasting is not to control our spiritual formation or control God and the outcomes of our lives. Fasting is to get in touch with our hunger for God. It is a surrender to Jesus – body, soul, spirit. A letting go of desired outcomes, and to offer all of our lives and our will to Jesus in love.

Over the 21 days, you may choose to fast or abstain in one or more of the following ways.

1. Liquid Fast – Refrain from all solid foods.
2. Daniel Fast – Consume fruits and vegetables only.
3. Media Fast – Give up all media, i.e. social media, television, movies, etc.
4. Lunch Fast – Fast lunch every day, use the time you would take to eat to find a quiet place to pray.
5. Whole Day Fast – From sun up to sun down fasting food and liquid except water, breaking the fast with a simple evening meal.
6. Complete Fast – Fasting food and liquids other than water for a chosen time period.