

Intro: Stefan Duerksen, Lead Pastor

Church-Wide Prayer: 1. Life on Mission: Churchwide commitment to "Each One, Reach One"

- Pray for schools – trustees, principles, teachers, students – to know Jesus, stand firm in and advocate for truth, opportunities to share Jesus
- Pray for Christian business leaders & employees – to shine brightly for Jesus – for people to know them for their love, integrity, hard work. For opportunities to share their faith
- Pray for our church to be missionally minded for the Glory of God! to use hobbies, homes, relationships, abilities, resources and lives to seek first the Kingdom of Heaven
- Pray, by name, for those you know who need to know Jesus!

Intro: Scripture gives us many examples of regular people, who faced regular and extraordinary challenges.... What do these characters have in common?

1. Moses before receiving the 10 Commandments
2. Ezra & Israel faced danger as they returned out of exile
3. Esther risked her life and went boldly before her King
4. David dealing with the sin he committed!
5. The King of Ninevah when he realized his peoples sin was so great they were about to be judged!
6. Anna as she waited for Messiah!
7. Cornelious as he wanted to know God!
8. The disciples before making big decisions!
9. Jesus before choosing his 12 disciples
10. Jesus BEFORE starting his public ministry

Whether facing enemies, dealing with sin, needing wisdom, persevering in a hard circumstance, seeking direction, or just waiting on the Lord to move in a situation – PRAYER & FASTING is what we see!

Leanord Ravenhill quote: "everyone wants to be clothed with power, but no one wants to be stripped of self."

A. Biblical Purposes of Fasting

Matthew 6:16-18 (ESV) ¹⁶ "And when you fast, do not look gloomy like the hypocrites, for they disfigure their faces that their fasting may be seen by others. Truly, I say to you, they have received their reward.

¹⁷ But when you fast, anoint your head and wash your face, that your fasting may not be seen by others but by your Father who is in secret. And your Father who sees in secret will reward you.

Dietrich Bonhoeffer, *"Jesus takes it for granted that His disciples will observe the pious custom of fasting. Strict exercise of self-control is an essential feature of the Christian life. Such customs have only one purpose – to make the disciples more ready and cheerful to accomplish those things which God would have done."*

1. To draw near to & worship God!

- **Mt – Jesus clearly says that the purpose of both prayer and fasting is about MEETING GOD IN THE SECRET PLACE.**

- **Luke 2:36-38 (ESV)** ³⁶ And there was a prophetess, Anna, the daughter of Phanuel, of the tribe of Asher. She was advanced in years, having lived with her husband seven years from when she was a virgin, ³⁷ and then as a widow until she was eighty-four. She did not depart from the temple, worshiping with fasting and prayer night and day. ³⁸ And coming up at that very hour she began to give thanks to God and to speak of him to all who were waiting for the redemption of Jerusalem.
- **James says**, “draw near to God and he will draw near to you” when we fast – we deny our flesh of good things – like food – so that we can seek God! Draw near to Him! And he promises to meet us!
- This is one of our main purposes on earth! To seek God! **“you won’t know WHO you are until you know WHOSE you are!”**
- **Fasting & Prayer is a key way to do that! MORE ON THIS IN the IDENTITY SERIES!**

2. To express & grow our longing for Jesus' return! Maranatha!

- **Matthew 9:14-15 (ESV)** ¹⁴ Then the disciples of John came to him, saying, “Why do we and the Pharisees fast, but your disciples do not fast?” And Jesus said to them, “Can the wedding guests mourn as long as the bridegroom is with them? The days will come when the bridegroom is taken away from them, and then they will fast.”
- **Piper says**, “The heart of it (fasting) is longing. We are putting our stomach where our heart is to give added intensity and expressiveness to our ache for Jesus. We fast to express our longing or our ache for all the implications of Jesus’s power in the present moment that isn’t completely realized.... We want to see people healed. We want to see people saved. We want to see marriages redeemed. We ache, and we long for this to happen; **therefore, we ask Jesus to come by putting this exclamation point of longing at the end of our desires.**”
- Doesn’t this make you want to fast???? 😊

3. To humble ourselves before God – voluntary weakness

- **Ezra 8:21, 23 (ESV)** *Then I proclaimed a fast there, at the river Ahava, that we might humble ourselves before our God, to seek from him a safe journey for ourselves, our children, and all our goods...So we fasted and implored our God for this, and he listened to our entreaty.*
- **When we humble ourselves before God he gives us grace!**
- **James 4:6 (ESV)** But he gives more grace. Therefore it says, “God opposes the proud but gives grace to the humble.”
- **2 Corinthians 12:9-10 (ESV)** *But he said to me, “My grace is sufficient for you, for my power is made perfect in weakness.” Therefore I will boast all the more gladly of my weaknesses, so that the power of Christ may rest upon me. For the sake of Christ, then, I am content with weaknesses, insults, hardships, persecutions, and calamities. For when I am weak, then I am strong.*
- **Many believers face poverty and persecution** – this is **involuntary** weakness! Then they humble themselves through fasting and prayer – **voluntary** weakness to seek God and gain the victory!
- Paul had **INVOLUNTARY** weaknesses: thorn in his flesh, persecution, sickness, reproach, distress.
- But Paul also **chose VOLUNTARY** weakness for the same reason ... Paul fasted & prayed! (Acts 13)
- **Weakness is mandatory for those who desire spiritual strength!**
- **PERSONAL**: you may be here and going through unimaginable and INVOLUNTARY suffering in your life – My heart aches for YOU! Perhaps FASTING & PRAYING – is a way for you to get SPIRITUAL STRENGTH to overcome or endure!

4. To express sorrow for sin & REPENT towards God

- **Joel 2:12-13 (ESV)** “Yet even now,” declares the LORD, **“return to me with all your heart,** with fasting, with weeping, and with mourning;¹³ and 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; and he relents over disaster.
- **King of Ninevah called a national fast as they turned from sin and turned toward God!**
- **David fasted & prayed after committing adultery with Bathsheba!**
- **One sin that is common & overlooked in the West – living duplicitous lives!**
- **Isaiah 58:3-11 (ESV)** ‘Why have we fasted, and you see it not? Why have we humbled ourselves, and you take no knowledge of it?’ Behold, **in the day of your fast you seek your own pleasure,**
- They were FASTING – but then seeking their OWN PLEASURE.
- For example: when I first started fasting... I would starve myself and then to pass time, play video games and watch TV to get through... then I wondered why my fasting seemed ineffective in what I was praying for (or NOT actually praying for) and for deepening my relationship with God!
 1. This is not true fasting – it’s called a STARVATION DIET.
- **James 4:2–3 (ESV)** You desire and do not have, so you murder. You covet and cannot obtain, so you fight and quarrel. You do not have, because you do not ask. ³ You ask and do not receive, because you ask wrongly, to spend it on your passions.
- **Prayer & Fasting is not magic to get what YOU WANT** – Prayer & fasting is voluntary weakness! Humbling ourselves before God! To truly SEEK HIM in our lives & circumstances!
- **Acts 3:19-20 (ESV)** Repent therefore, and turn back, that your sins may be blotted out,²⁰ that times of refreshing may come from the presence of the Lord, and that he may send the Christ appointed for you, Jesus,
- **Dealing with a double heart: (sin)**
- **First: Search your heart**
 1. Search your heart: *thoughts, money, relationships, free time, work, rest, obedience steps, loving others, _____ (other)* Am I living for ME? or, living for JESUS?
- **Second: Confess & Surrender**
 1. **Jeremiah 3:14 (NIV)** *Return, faithless people,” declares the LORD, “for I am your husband.*
 2. These are words of intimacy! Jesus is jealous for your devotion!
 3. Confess any areas of holding onto your own life as sin and then repent and turn to him with all your heart!
- **Third: Fast & Pray for a changed heart & victory!**
 1. **Joel 2:12 (NIV)** *‘Even now,’ declares the LORD, ‘return to me with all your heart, with fasting and weeping and mourning.’*
 2. Fast & Pray for him to change your heart & empower you to live a fully surrendered life!

5. To resist temptation

- **Matthew 4:1-4 (ESV)** Then Jesus was led up by the Spirit into the wilderness to be tempted by the devil. And after fasting forty days and forty nights, he was hungry. And the tempter came and said to him, “If you are the Son of God, command these stones to become loaves of bread.” But he answered, “It is written, **“Man shall not live by bread alone, but by every word that comes from the mouth of God.”**”
- Jesus calls us to fast and He sets the example of FASTING – before beginning ministry & being tempted!
- **Some people just can’t get victory over certain besetting sins: anger, bitterness, jealousy, addictions to alcohol, drugs, food, pornography, etc.**

- **Reason:** you can't just WIN your freedom; you have to WALK OUT your freedom.
- One of the key ways to walk in your freedom, is through fasting & prayer!
- **FASTING trains us to deny those hungers that drive us! By fasting from food and media, or whatever we fast from, we are training ourselves to resist our souls cries to feel good!**

6. To seek wisdom, guidance & direction from God!

- **Moses fasted & prayed BEFORE getting 10 Commandments!**
- **Exodus 34:28 (ESV)** So he was there with the LORD forty days and forty nights. He neither ate bread nor drank water. And he wrote on the tablets the words of the covenant, the Ten Commandments.
- **Daniel – fasted for 3 weeks – no meat, wine, delicacies – fruits, vegetables and water! As he sought revelation from the Lord!**
- **Daniel 10:12 (ESV)** Then he said to me, “Fear not, Daniel, for from the first day that you set your heart to understand and humbled yourself before your God, your words have been heard, and I have come because of your words.
- **Jesus fasted SLEEP & stayed up praying before selecting 12 disciples**
- **The apostles before choosing ministers – what wisdom and direction are you needing life?**

7. To strengthen prayers of intercession, supplication & warfare

- **Matthew 17:21 & Mark 9:29** – some Bibles say, “prayer & fasting” – some do not! Why? It appears that some of the earliest manuscripts didn't saying “FASTING”. Why add it in? it appears the early disciples, church, and scribes, for the reasons mentioned above... really believed that FASTING & PRAYER together were an important discipline for seeing MOUNTAINS MOVE.

8. For strength to face impossible circumstances (Worship team be ready – keys start playing)

- **Luke 22:39–46 (ESV)** *And he came out and went, as was his custom, to the Mount of Olives, and the disciples followed him. And when he came to the place, he said to them, “Pray that you may not enter into temptation.” And he withdrew from them about a stone's throw, and knelt down and prayed, saying, “Father, if you are willing, remove this cup from me. Nevertheless, not my will, but yours, be done.” And there appeared to him an angel from heaven, strengthening him. And being in agony he prayed more earnestly; and his sweat became like great drops of blood falling down to the ground. And when he rose from prayer, he came to the disciples and found them sleeping for sorrow, and he said to them, “Why are you sleeping? Rise and pray that you may not enter into temptation.”*
- **Jesus fasted sleep and prayed! And he was strengthened by an ANGEL! This is JESUS!**
- **What impossible circumstance are you facing? Sickness? Relational? Your past? Temptation?**

B. Choose a FAST & set aside time to PRAY

PULL OUT FASTING CARDS – INVITE TO JOIN! MOST IMPORTANT: when FASTING – SEEK THE LORD! Set aside EXTRA time to SEEK THE LORD! Don't just starve, or not watch TV or play on your phone – and be irritable! NO! SPEND TIME SEEKING THE LORD!

AFTER SERVICE PRAYER – PRAYER ROOM – 9AM and 11AM

MARANATHA!! Come soon Lord!

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SC CHURCH WIDE PRAYER REQUESTS 2024

Cruise ship → → → → → Battleship

1. **Life on Mission:** Churchwide commitment to "Each One, Reach One"
2. **Heart of Southland:** 500 people - Prayer Summit, Set Free! & Bible in a year
3. **Next Gen:** ❤️ Passion for Jesus, memorization & find identity in Christ
4. **Church Renewal:** Double funding, mentors & CRI Churches in Canada
5. **Persecuted Church & Israel:** Salvation, hope & perseverance - MARANATHA!