



PRAYER & FASTING GUIDE

FAITH AT HOME

GUIDE TO PRAYER

PRAY FOR MARRIAGES

Pray for couples to intentionally strengthen their marriage, laying the foundation for strong families to be built upon.

“Husbands, love your wives, just as Christ loved the church and gave himself up for her to make her holy, cleansing her by the washing with water through the word, and to present her to himself as a radiant church, without stain or wrinkle or any other blemish, but holy and blameless. In this same way, husbands ought to love their wives as their own bodies. He who loves his wife loves himself. After all, no one ever hated their own body, but they feed and care for their body, just as Christ does the church — for we are members of his body. “For this reason a man will leave his father and mother and be united to his wife, and the two will become one flesh.” This is a profound mystery — but I am talking about Christ and the church. However, each one of you also must love his wife as he loves himself, and the wife must respect her husband.” (Ephesians 5:25-33 NIV)

PRAY FOR INDIVIDUALS

Pray for parents to become the primary disciple-makers in their home by personally modeling spiritual growth, building biblical, life-giving relationships with their children, and engaging as a family in life patterns of spiritual growth.

“Love the Lord your God with all your heart and with all your soul and with all your strength. These commandments that I give you today are to be on your hearts. Impress them on your children. Talk about them when you sit at home and when you walk along the road, when you lie down and when you get up. Tie them as symbols on your hands and bind them on your foreheads.” (Deuteronomy 6:5-8 NIV)

GUIDE TO PRAYER

PRAY FOR INDIVIDUALS (CONTINUED)

Pray for adults, at all ages and stages, to take intentional steps to create a God-honoring home and to grow spiritually.

"Brothers and sisters, I do not consider myself yet to have taken hold of it. But one thing I do: Forgetting what is behind and straining toward what is ahead, I press on toward the goal to win the prize for which God has called me heavenward in Christ Jesus." (Philippians 3:13-14 NIV)

"For this very reason, make every effort to add to your faith goodness; and to goodness, knowledge; and to knowledge, self-control; and to self-control, perseverance; and to perseverance, godliness; and to godliness, mutual affection; and to mutual affection, love. For if you possess these qualities in increasing measure, they will keep you from being ineffective and unproductive in your knowledge of our Lord Jesus Christ." (2 Peter 1:5-8 NIV)

Unless the Lord builds the house, the builders labor in vain.

Unless the Lord watches over the city, the guards stand watch in vain.

In vain you rise early and stay up late, toiling for food to eat —

for he grants sleep to those he loves.

(Psalm 127:1-2)

PRAY FOR PARENTS

Pray for parents to prioritize worshiping as a family together on Sunday mornings.

“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.”

(Hebrews 10:24-25 NIV)

“They devoted themselves to the apostles’ teaching and to fellowship, to the breaking of bread and to prayer. Everyone was filled with awe at the many wonders and signs performed by the apostles. All the believers were together and had everything in common. They sold property and possessions to give to anyone who had need. Every day they continued to meet together in the temple courts. They broke bread in their homes and ate together with glad and sincere hearts, praising God and enjoying the favor of all the people. And the Lord added to their number daily those who were being saved.” (Acts 2:42-47 NIV)

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PRAY FOR PARENTS (CONTINUED)

Pray for parents to prioritize their children's and students' engagement in spiritual growth opportunities.

"As Jesus and his disciples were on their way, he came to a village where a woman named Martha opened her home to him. She had a sister called Mary, who sat at the Lord's feet listening to what he said. But Martha was distracted by all the preparations that had to be made. She came to him and asked, "Lord, don't you care that my sister has left me to do the work by myself? Tell her to help me!" "Martha, Martha," the Lord answered, "you are worried and upset about many things, but few things are needed — or indeed only one. Mary has chosen what is better, and it will not be taken away from her." (Luke 10:38-42 NIV)

Pray for parents to work together to reach this current generation and generations to come with the love of Jesus by intentionally and actively "BLESSing" others as a family.

"We will not hide them from their descendants; we will tell the next generation the praiseworthy deeds of the Lord, his power, and the wonders he has done. He decreed statutes for Jacob and established the law in Israel, which he commanded our ancestors to teach their children, so the next generation would know them, even the children yet to be born, and they in turn would tell their children. Then they would put their trust in God and would not forget his deeds but would keep his commands." (Psalm 78:4-7) NIV

PRAY FOR THE NEXT GENERATION

Pray for children to come to know Jesus at an early age.

“Start children off on the way they should go, and even when they are old they will not turn from it.” (Proverbs 22:6 NIV)

“Jesus said, “Let the little children come to me, and do not hinder them, for the kingdom of heaven belongs to such as these.” (Matthew 19:14 NIV)

Pray for students to internalize and own their commitment to follow Jesus, engaging in and growing from intentional, biblical relationships, especially within their families and in small groups.

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GUIDE TO PRAYER

PRAY FOR THE NEXT GENERATION (CONTINUED)

Pray for children, students, and adults to declare their faith publicly through baptism.

“Peter replied, “Repent and be baptized, every one of you, in the name of Jesus Christ for the forgiveness of your sins. And you will receive the gift of the Holy Spirit. The promise is for you and your children and for all who are far off—for all whom the Lord our God will call.” Acts 2:38-39 NIV

Pray for children, students, and adults to develop a foundational understanding of the Word of God and how to follow Jesus, establishing patterns of spiritual growth.

“Do your best to present yourself to God as one approved, a worker who does not need to be ashamed and who correctly handles the word of truth.” (2 Timothy 2:15 NIV)

“But as for you, continue in what you have learned and have become convinced of, because you know those from whom you learned it, and how from infancy you have known the Holy Scriptures, which are able to make you wise for salvation through faith in Christ Jesus. All Scripture is God-breathed and is useful for teaching, rebuking, correcting, and training in righteousness, so that the servant of God may be thoroughly equipped for every good work.” (2 Timothy 3:14-17 NIV)

PRAY FOR THE NEXT GENERATION (CONTINUED)

Pray for students to make an impact through using their spiritual gifts in ministry, actively taking steps to share the love of Jesus with their peers, across generations, and cross-culturally, and preparing for God-honoring adulthood intellectually, emotionally, spiritually, and relationally.

"So Christ himself gave the apostles, the prophets, the evangelists, the pastors and teachers, to equip his people for works of service, so that the body of Christ may be built up until we all reach unity in the faith and in the knowledge of the Son of God and become mature, attaining to the whole measure of the fullness of Christ. Then we will no longer be infants, tossed back and forth by the waves, and blown here and there by every wind of teaching and by the cunning and craftiness of people in their deceitful scheming. Instead, speaking the truth in love, we will grow to become in every respect the mature body of him who is the head, that is, Christ. From him the whole body, joined and held together by every supporting ligament, grows and builds itself up in love, as each part does its work." Ephesians 4:11-16 NIV

Pray for the Lord to give wisdom and guidance to all of those who serve as Family Ministry leaders, as they shepherd those who are pursuing spiritual transformation and growth. Pray for Jesus to watch over these leaders and their families, as they serve other families.

"If any of you lacks wisdom, you should ask God, who gives generously to all without finding fault, and it will be given to you." (James 1:5 NIV)

"The LORD is my strength and my shield; my heart trusts in him, and he helps me."
(Psalm 28:7 NIV)

GUIDE TO FASTING

A right approach to fasting requires an appreciation for the biblical record of fasting, a clear definition of fasting, and a correct distinction between “religious” and biblical fasting.

DEFENDING FASTING

The biblical record on fasting reads like a “Who’s Who” of Scripture. Moses, David, Jehosaphat, Ezra, Nehemiah, Esther, Daniel, Jesus, Paul, and many other men and women of Scripture fasted. Though Jesus never commanded His followers to fast, He Himself fasted and assumed His followers would fast. (Matthew 6:16, Mark 2:18-22)

DEFINING FASTING

Fasting is the voluntary abstinence from food for a limited time for the purpose of expressing to God one’s desires, dependence, and/or dedication. The normal fast was the total abstinence of food (but not water), and it could last anywhere from one to forty days. Abstaining from food and caloric drink is an accurate picture of fasting and represents the approach taken by the leadership of Hill Country Bible Church.

DISTINGUISHING FASTING

Many world religions practice fasting as one of many “good works” done in the hope of earning God’s acceptance and forgiveness. Biblical Christianity, however, recognizes that man cannot earn salvation (Ephesians 2:8-9). Instead of man working his way up to God, Biblical Christianity teaches that God has reached down to man by graciously offering the free gift of eternal life to anyone who places their faith in Jesus Christ. Biblical fasting, then, is not something done in pursuit of a relationship with God, but is in response to a relationship with God (Isaiah 58).

In addition to requiring a good definition, a right approach to biblical fasting also necessitates a clear understanding of purpose.



GUIDE TO FASTING

In God's Chosen Fast, Arthur Wallis wrote, "The man who prays with fasting is giving heaven notice that he is truly in earnest."

A study of each of the passages in Scripture on fasting reveals two primary reasons for fasting and one significant result of fasting.

Two of the primary reasons for fasting:

To petition God intensely

To pursue God intimately

One of the primary results of fasting:

Dependence

What we know to be true in theory becomes crystal clear in experience. Without food, we begin to waste away physically, and apart from a growing relationship with Christ, we wither spiritually. When David compared his hungering and thirsting for God to physical hunger and thirst in the wilderness, he concluded that worship was the only thing that satisfied him (Psalm 63). Fasting moves us to humble worship of our Provider and promotes a craving for deeper fellowship with our Savior. Jesus said, "Man does not live by bread alone, but by every word that proceeds from the mouth of God." (Matthew 4:4) Job said, "I have treasured the words of His mouth more than my daily bread." (Job 23:12b)

With a clear understanding of definition and purpose, all that remains are some helpful suggestions on what to do while fasting. A suggested agenda follows some common-sense warnings.

AWARENESS

Before fasting, it is good to consult your physician where there may be implications for any existing health conditions. For example, those on prescription medicines or with chronic illnesses like diabetes should definitely seek the advice of their doctor. However, everyone should expect some physical discomfort while fasting. Common sense and wisdom should also be exercised regarding how to break a fast, especially extended fasts.

AN AGENDA

During fasting, hunger pains can serve as a reminder to pray and worship. If at all possible, commit the time that is normally spent in the preparation and eating of three meals to prayer and worship. Following is a suggested guide to spending an hour in prayer and worship.

Begin with worship by singing favorite praise choruses and hymns.

(10 minutes)

Continue by responding to God in prayer, acknowledging dependence upon Him.

(15 minutes)

Move to a time of personal reflection and confession of sin.

(5 minutes)

Allow time for Scripture reading.

(10 minutes)

Express your desires, longings, and concerns to God in prayer.

(15 minutes)

Close with a time of thanksgiving for God's goodness and provision.

(5 minutes)

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