



PRAYER & FASTING GUIDE

BEING CHRISTIAN IN A HOSTILE WORLD

THROUGHOUT HISTORY, CHRISTIANITY HAS CLASHED WITH SURROUNDING CULTURE IN DIFFERENT WAYS. BUT TODAY, WE ARE SEEING A SHIFT IN THE UNITED STATES UNLIKE EVER BEFORE. OUR CULTURE IS NOT ONLY MOVING AWAY FROM CHRISTIAN VALUES, BUT ALSO SEEMS TO BE GROWING INCREASINGLY HOSTILE TO THE BIBLICAL WORLDVIEW.

IT CAN FEEL AS THOUGH WE ARE FACING ATTACKS TO IMPORTANT ASPECTS OF OUR FAITH FROM ALL DIRECTIONS. PERHAPS YOU'RE STRUGGLING WITH THE TEMPTATION TO FOLLOW THE CROWD DESPITE BIBLICAL TEACHING TO THE CONTRARY, OR MAYBE YOU'RE SIMPLY WEARY. WHEREVER YOU FIND YOURSELF, LET'S PRAY AND FAST WITH A FOCUS ON HOW WE AS CHRISTIANS CAN LIVE OUT OUR FAITH IN THIS INCREASINGLY HOSTILE CULTURE.

FORTUNATELY, GOD HAS GIVEN US THE RESOURCES WE NEED NOT JUST TO SURVIVE, BUT TO THRIVE IN THE MIDST OF OPPOSITION. USE THIS GUIDE AS A PROMPT FOR PRAYER AND TIPS ON FASTING AS YOU INTENTIONALLY SEEK GOD OVER THE NEXT 24 HOURS.

BEING CHRISTIAN...

THANK GOD FOR WHO HE IS, HIS BEAUTIFUL AND TRUSTWORTHY DESIGN, AND HIS UNFAILING LOVE FOR EACH OF US.

“And he passed in front of Moses, proclaiming, “The Lord, the Lord, the compassionate and gracious God, slow to anger, abounding in love and faithfulness, maintaining love to thousands, and forgiving wickedness, rebellion and sin...” (Exodus 34:6-7)

“In the beginning God created the heavens and the earth. Now the earth was formless and empty, darkness was over the surface of the deep, and the Spirit of God was hovering over the waters.” (Genesis 1:1-2)

“For you are God, O Sovereign Lord. Your words are truth, and you have promised these good things to your servant.” (2 Samuel 7:28)

SEEK FORGIVENESS FOR ANY AREA IN YOUR LIFE THAT GOD IS ASKING YOU TO REPENT OF AND RELEASE.

“Search me, God, and know my heart; test me and know my anxious thoughts. See if there is any offensive way in me, and lead me in the way everlasting.” (Psalm 139:23-24)

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BEING CHRISTIAN...(CONTINUED)

SEEK FORGIVENESS FOR ANY AREA IN YOUR LIFE THAT GOD IS ASKING YOU TO REPENT OF AND RELEASE. (Continued)

“Against you, you only, have I sinned and done what is evil in your sight; son you are right in your verdict and justified when you judge...Create in me a pure heart, O God, and renew a steadfast spirit within me. Do not cast me from your presence or take your Holy Spirit from me. Restore to me the joy of your salvation and grant me a willing spirit, to sustain me.”
(Psalm 51: 4, 10-12)

THANK GOD FOR THE GIFT OF FORGIVENESS AND RECONCILIATION YOU RECEIVE IN JESUS.

“God saved you by his grace when you believed. And you can’t take credit for this; it is a gift from God. Salvation is not a reward for the good things we have done, so none of us can boast about it. For we are God’s masterpiece. He has created us anew in Christ Jesus, so we can do the good things he planned for us long ago.” (Ephesians 2:8-10)

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BEING CHRISTIAN...IN A HOSTILE WORLD

THANK GOD FOR TRANSFORMING YOU AND GROWING IN YOU HIS DESIRES FOR YOUR LIFE THAT HONOR AND GLORIFY HIM.

“Every good and perfect gift is from above, coming down from the Father of the heavenly lights, who does not change like shifting shadows. He chose to give us birth through the word of truth, that we might be a kind of firstfruits of all he created.” (James 1:17-18)

“So then, just as you received Christ Jesus as Lord, continue to live your lives in him, rooted and built up in him, strengthened in the faith as you were taught, and overflowing with thankfulness.” (Colossians 2:6-7)

ASK GOD TO SHOW YOU WHAT LIFE PATTERNS YOU ARE EMBRACING THAT DO NOT BRING HIM GLORY AND HINDER YOUR SPIRITUAL GROWTH. ASK THE HOLY SPIRIT FOR STRENGTH AND COURAGE TO UNBIND YOU FROM THOSE LIFE PATTERNS AND TRANSFORM YOU.

“Therefore, I urge you, brothers and sisters, in view of God’s mercy, to offer your bodies as a living sacrifice, holy and pleasing to God—this is your true and proper worship. Do not conform to the pattern of this world, but be transformed by the renewing of your mind. Then you will be able to test and approve what God’s will is—his good, pleasing and perfect will.” (Romans 12:1-2)

BEING CHRISTIAN...IN A HOSTILE WORLD (CONTINUED)

ASK GOD TO HELP YOU RECOGNIZE HOW SATAN IS WORKING IN THIS WORLD TO DRAW PEOPLE AWAY FROM KNOWING AND WORSHIPING THE ONE AND ONLY TRUE GOD. ASK THE HOLY SPIRIT TO HELP YOU...

Know and apply the truth to my life and speak truth in love in a fallen world...

- “Sanctify them by the truth; your word is truth.” (John 17:17)
- “All Scripture is God-breathed and is useful for teaching, rebuking, correcting and training in righteousness.” (2 Timothy 3:16)
- “My command is this: Love each other as I have loved you. Greater love has no one than this: to lay down one’s life for one’s friends.” (John 15:12-13)

To not become arrogant, ignorant, indulgent or deceived by false prophets...

- “For we did not follow cleverly devised stories when we told you about the coming of our Lord Jesus Christ in power, but we were eyewitnesses of his majesty.” (2 Peter 1:16)
- “For the time will come when people will not put up with sound doctrine. Instead, to suit their own desires, they will gather around them a great number of teachers to say what their itching ears want to hear. They will turn their ears away from the truth and turn aside to myths.” (2 Timothy 4:3-4)

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BEING CHRISTIAN...IN A HOSTILE WORLD (CONTINUED)

**ASK GOD TO HELP YOU RECOGNIZE HOW SATAN IS WORKING IN THIS WORLD TO DRAW PEOPLE AWAY FROM KNOWING AND WORSHIPING THE ONE AND ONLY TRUE GOD. ASK THE HOLY SPIRIT TO HELP YOU...
(CONTINUED)**

Be disciplined and intentional in becoming more like Jesus through virtue formation...

"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)

Live and walk in faith, instead of fleeing, freezing, or fighting when facing difficulty...

"Finally, be strong in the Lord and in his mighty power. Put on the full armor of God, so that you can take your stand against the devil's schemes. For our struggle is not against flesh and blood, but against the rulers, against the authorities, against the powers of this dark world and against the spiritual forces of evil in the heavenly realms." (Ephesians 6:10-12)

BEING CHRISTIAN...IN A HOSTILE WORLD (CONTINUED)

**ASK GOD TO HELP YOU SEE AND BELIEVE THAT YOU HAVE EVERYTHING
YOU NEED TO BECOME LIKE JESUS AND TO LIVE A GODLY LIFE.**

“His divine power has given us everything we need for a godly life through our knowledge of him who called us by his own glory and goodness. Through these he has given us his very great and precious promises, so that through them you may participate in the divine nature, having escaped the corruption in the world caused by evil desires.” (2 Peter 1:3-4)

“I have been crucified with Christ and I no longer live, but Christ lives in me. The life I now live in the body, I live by faith in the Son of God, who loved me and gave himself for me.” (Galatians 2:20)

IMPACTING GREATER AUSTIN & THE NEXT GENERATION

ASK GOD TO HELP YOU SEE EVERY INDIVIDUAL AS SOMEONE DEEPLY LOVED AND CREATED IN HIS IMAGE, AND TO NOT CONFUSE SAVING THE “SOUL” OF OUR COUNTRY WITH SAVING “SOULS.”

“So God created mankind in his own image, in the image of God he created them; male and female he created them. God blessed them and said to them, ‘Be fruitful and increase in number; fill the earth and subdue it. Rule over the fish in the sea and the birds in the sky and over every living creature that moves on the ground.’” (Genesis 1:27-28)

“Therefore, as God’s chosen people, holy and dearly loved, clothe yourselves with compassion, kindness, humility, gentleness and patience. Bear with each other and forgive one another if any of you has a grievance against someone. Forgive as the Lord forgave you. And over all these virtues put on love, which binds them all together in perfect unity.” (Colossians 3:12-14)

IMPACTING GREATER AUSTIN & THE NEXT GENERATION (CONTINUED)

CHOOSE SOMEONE ON YOUR FRANC (FRIEND, RELATIVE, ACQUAINTANCE, NEIGHBOR, CO-WORKER) LIST AND PRAY FOR THEM TO HEAR AND BELIEVE THE GOSPEL AND RECEIVE THE GIFT AND GRACE OF LIFE IN JESUS.

“But do not forget this one thing, dear friends: With the Lord a day is like a thousand years, and a thousand years are like a day. The Lord is not slow in keeping his promise, as some understand slowness. Instead, he is patient with you, not wanting anyone to perish, but everyone to come to repentance.”
(2 Peter 3:8-9)

“So then, dear friends, since you are looking forward to this, make every effort to be found spotless, blameless and at peace with him.” (2 Peter 3:14)

PRAISE GOD SPECIFICALLY FOR THE STUDENTS AND CHILDREN, OUR NEXT GENERATION, WHO HAVE RECEIVED THE GIFT OF ETERNAL LIFE AND FOR OUR PEOPLE WHO INVEST IN THEIR SPIRITUAL DEVELOPMENT.

“Give praise to the Lord, proclaim his name; make known among the nations what he has done.” (Psalm 105:1)

GUIDE TO PRAYER

IMPACTING GREATER AUSTIN & THE NEXT GENERATION (CONTINUED)

PRAY THAT THE NEXT GENERATION WOULD NOT BE SHAPED BY THE CULTURE OF TODAY BUT WOULD BE SHAPED BY CHRIST'S LOVE.

"Do not conform to the pattern of this world but be transformed by the renewing of your mind." (Romans 12:2)

ASK GOD TO SHOW OUR PARENTS, STUDENTS AND CHILDREN THAT TRUTH IS DIFFERENT THAN PERSPECTIVE AND THAT THEY WOULD BE SHAPED BY GOD'S WORD WHICH IS TRUTH.

"Sanctify them in your truth; your word is truth." (John 17:17)

PRAY THAT GOD WOULD GIVE OUR PARENTS, STUDENTS AND CHILDREN A LASER FOCUS ON THINGS THAT MATTER TO GOD IN THE MIDDLE OF ALL THE THINGS PEOPLE TELL THEM THEY SHOULD FOCUS ON.

"Set your minds on things above, not on earthly things. For you died, and your life is now hidden with Christ in God." (Colossians 3:2-3)

"But seek first his kingdom and his righteousness, and all these things will be given to you as well." (Matthew 6:33)

IMPACTING GREATER AUSTIN & THE NEXT GENERATION (CONTINUED)

PRAY THAT GOD WOULD WORK IN THE HEARTS OF OUR STUDENTS AND CHILDREN SO THAT THEY WOULD DESIRE TO SEE THEIR LOST FRIENDS COME TO FAITH IN CHRIST.

“Then he said to his disciples, “The harvest is plentiful but the workers are few. Ask the Lord of the harvest, therefore, to send out workers into his harvest field.” (Matthew 9:37-38)

THANK GOD FOR INVITING YOU INTO THIS PRIVILEGED JOURNEY AND PROCESS, AND TO YOU LIVE ON MISSION, BE FRUITFUL, CONFIDENT, AND REWARDED WHILE YOU TRUST IN HIS PROVISION AND SOVEREIGNTY.

“Therefore, my dear friends, as you have always obeyed—not only in my presence, but now much more in my absence—continue to work out your salvation with fear and trembling, for it is God who works in you to will and to act in order to fulfill His good purpose.” (Philippians 2:12-13)

“Therefore go and make disciples of all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit, and teaching them to obey everything I have commanded you. And surely I am with you always, to the very end of the age.” (Matthew 28:19-20)

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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