



THE DANIEL FAST GUIDE

BY CROSSROADS CHRISTIAN CENTER

Dear Crossroads,

We are so glad you have decided to participate in an extended time of prayer, fasting and personal devotion. There really is no better way to reset our spiritual compass and bring about refreshing in every area of our lives at the beginning of the new year than through prayer and fasting. Our hope is that this time of prayer and fasting will refresh us personally but also our church as we seek His blessing and direction.

Crossroad's Daniel fast was intentionally designed to be flexible so that you can participate at any level. Whether you have done a 21-day season of prayer and fasting before, or if this is your first time, you can start where you are and experience what God has in store for you in a powerful way. Daily devotions, scripture reading and suggested prayers are included in this booklet. Please commit to reading them each day. The last week will focus on the ultimate sacrifice Jesus made on the cross and the victory we have through His resurrection.

We pray that you will experience the presence and power of God in an extraordinary way as you commit yourself to Him over the next 21 days. May you be closer to God than ever before as you seek Him first.

As you prepare for the next 21 days, think about why you are fasting. Is it for spiritual renewal, for guidance, for healing, for the resolution of problems, for special grace to handle a difficult situation, or for a major decision? Ask the Holy Spirit to clarify His leading and objectives for your Daniel fast. This will enable you to pray more specifically and strategically. Think about the top two or three most pressing issues on your heart and zone in on those with God. Write these down in the space provided below, and be open to hearing what God wants to show you in those areas.

When praying, make your primary goal to know Jesus more and experience Him. Focus first on what's right about Him, such as His goodness and His greatness, and see everything else through that filter.

Finally, make time to pray daily. Don't overcomplicate this! Just talk to God. Have that place and time where you can seek Him every day. If you don't plan to pray, you won't.

During this fast, I am praying and believing God for:

Praying with you,

The Leadership of Crossroads (Pastors David and Lynn Willis, Pastors John and Bridgette Ballisty, Pastor Micah Jones, Pastor Letty and "Smiley" Montes) and the Church Board (Tom and Niki Allison, Kim and Danny Benz, Sandra Cagle, Ric and Francine Menjivar, Mark Perry, and Steve & Denise Walker).

fasting guide

Adapted from Your Personal Guide to Fasting and Prayer, by Dr. Bill Bright, Campus Crusade for Christ International and Awakening Guide 2012, by Celebration Church and from Fair Haven Church's "Awakening: 21 Days of Prayer, Fasting and Personal Devotion."

<http://www.cru.org/training-and-growth/devotional-life/personal-guide-to-fasting/index.htm>

http://myrockharbor.org/wp-content/uploads/2013/01/awakening_devos_2013b.pdf

why fast?

Fasting has the potential for significant impact in our lives. Through fasting and prayer, the Holy Spirit can transform your life personally and God can speak to you in new and dynamic ways.

Fasting and prayer can also work on a much grander scale. According to Scripture, personal experience and observation, we are convinced that when God's people fast with a proper Biblical motive – seeking God's face not His hand – with a broken, repentant, and contrite spirit, God will hear from heaven and heal our lives, our churches, our communities, our nation and world. Fasting and prayer can bring about revival – a change in the direction of our nation, the nations of earth and the fulfillment of the Great Commission.

Biblical fasting is, very simply, denying oneself something for the sake of seeking and honoring God. Pastor Stovall Weems says that "prayer is connecting with God; fasting is disconnecting ourselves from the world." That's a great way to describe the feeling. In addition to food, you can also fast from other things that keep you connected to the world. These may include television, social media, video games and more.

why you should fast:

If you do not already know of the power and importance of fasting, here are some very important facts:

- Fasting was an expected discipline in both the Old and New Testament eras. For example, Moses fasted at least two recorded 40-day periods. Jesus fasted 40 days and reminded His followers to fast, "when you fast," not if you fast.
- Fasting and prayer can restore the loss of the "first love" for your Lord and result in a more intimate relationship with Christ.
- Fasting is a Biblical way to truly humble yourself in the sight of God (Psalm 35:13; Ezra 8:21). King David said, "I humble myself through fasting."
- Fasting enables the Holy Spirit to reveal your true spiritual condition, resulting in brokenness, repentance and a transformed life.
- The Holy Spirit will quicken the Word of God in your heart and His truth will become more meaningful to you!

- Fasting can transform your prayer life into a richer and more personal experience.
- Fasting can result in a dynamic personal revival in your own life – and make you a channel of revival to others.

If you fast, you will find yourself being humbled. You will discover more time to pray and seek God's face. And as He leads you to recognize and repent of unconfessed sin, you will experience special blessings from God.

how to fast

As you prepare to fast, it is important to choose a fasting plan that works for you. While this section provides some general information about different types of fasts, as well as some suggestions on how to create your own fasting plan, it is important to mention that there is nothing more inherently spiritual about one type of fast as opposed to another. These are simply guidelines and suggestions on different things you can do.

Fasting can include food, social media and entertainment, among other things. It should be something you are accustomed to so that it stretches you to give it up. Giving it up for a period of time enables one to focus on God. For example, when those hunger pangs happen, turn to prayer. When you usually watch your television shows, open your Bible to read and pray instead. Fast from social media or watching sports so you can focus on God.

Don't let what you eat or do not eat become the focus of your fast. Our focus should be on drawing closer to God. Remember, this is a time to disconnect enough from your regular patterns and habits in order to connect more closely to God.

Here are a few tips to keep in mind before getting started.

1. Start where you are:

We are all at different places in our walk with God. Likewise our jobs, daily schedules and health conditions are all different and place various levels of demand on our energy. So most importantly, whether you've fasted before or this is your first time, start where you are. Your personal fast should present a level of challenge to it, but it's very important to know your own body, know your options and, most importantly, seek God in prayer and follow what that Holy Spirit leads you to do.

Remember, the goal of fasting is not just to do without food or Facebook. The goal is to draw nearer to God.

2. make your commitment

Pray about the kind of fast you should undertake. Jesus encouraged us to fast (Matthew 6:16-18). For Him it was a matter of when believers fast, not if they would do it. Before you fast, we encourage you to decide up front the type of fast God wants you to undertake and how much time each day you will devote to prayer and reading God's Word. Making these commitments

ahead of time will help sustain your fast when physical temptations and life's pressures tempt you to abandon it.

You may choose to fast all 21 days. Or you may choose to fast several days out of the 21 days, such as three or four days a week throughout the 21-day period. Maybe you will do that and do three to seven consecutive days at the end. This is your personal decision and should be prayerfully considered as it applies to your circumstances.

It is important to fast in a way that works for you. The goal is that you choose a fast that will be challenging for you but will work within your life. You should choose a plan that will cause you to rely on God and will create space in your life for Him to work.

different types of fasts

specific food or activity fast:

In this type of fast you omit a specific item(s) from your meal plans. For example, you may choose to eliminate all red meat, processed or fast food, or sweets. Most people can incorporate this type of fast relatively easily. It can also prove to be a great solution for people with specific dietary needs or medical conditions that may cause certain limitations.

While fasting typically refers to refraining from specific food items, you may also find it extremely beneficial to fast from a regular activity or habit. This might include things such as television, social media and the like.

Prayer and fasting are about both connecting to God and disconnecting from the world. Try to tune out some of the regular distractions from your day as much as possible. Replace that time with things that will nourish you spiritually.

daniel fast:

The Daniel fast is a great model to follow and one that is extremely effective for spiritual focus, bodily discipline and purification of the body and soul. It is probably one of the most commonly referred-to fasts; however, within the Daniel fast there is room for broad interpretation.

In the book of Daniel we find two different times where the prophet Daniel fasted. Daniel 1 states that he ate only vegetables and water, and in Daniel 10, while the passage does not give a specific list of foods that Daniel ate, it does state that he ate no rich (or choice) foods, as well as no red meat or wine. So based on these two verses, we can see that either of these, or combinations of the two, constitute a Daniel fast.

Again, it is important to mention that there is nothing inherently spiritual about one type of fast as opposed to another. The foundation of the Daniel fast is fruits and vegetables. Some starchy vegetables and dairy could be included, but that depends on the individual. Your goal should be to seek God in prayer about this and follow what the Holy Spirit leads you to do.

juice fast:

A juice fast is simply consuming vegetable and fruit juices and water instead of solid food. Many people include whey protein in their liquid plan as well. Even if you choose not to make your entire fast liquids-only, substituting one or two meals for liquids could be a great alternative.

fasting safely:

As you begin your fast, you may hear from concerned loved ones and friends who urge you to protect your health. And they are right. You should protect your health. But we want to encourage you that if done properly, fasting will not only prove to be a spiritual blessing, but a physical blessing as well.

You may, however, have a physical problem that would make fasting unwise or dangerous. This could include tumors, cancer, blood diseases, diabetes or heart disease. If that is the case, include your doctor in your decision on how to fast. Also, if you are under any type of medication, you may want to talk with your doctor before changing your regime.

fasting while nursing or pregnant:

Strict fasting while nursing or pregnant is not recommended. If you are in this season of life, here are some great options for you to consider – with the approval of your physician:

- A modified Daniel fast including whole grains, legumes, whey protein, calcium and iron supplements
- Fasting sweets and desserts
- Fasting red meat
- Fasting non-food activities like television, Facebook/Twitter, movies, etc.

fasting and eating disorders:

If you have struggled with an eating disorder, this situation is a battle that you can win through Christ (Philippians 4:13). Remember, fasting is a tool used to get closer to God, and it actually should keep us from being preoccupied with food. If your method of fasting is going to cause you to obsess about what you eat in any way, you will either need to change your approach or your mindset.

If giving up food is a stumbling block to you, then consider fasting of TV, Facebook, reading (other than the Bible), or shopping. There are many distractions and ways that we use to stay in control that we could eliminate from our daily routine. If you can identify such other things, maybe you can give those up instead of food.

Remember that you are covered by God's grace. God will show you what to do and give you His peace.

3. beginning and ending your fast well:

Depending on the type of fast you choose, it may be important to prepare your body ahead of time before beginning the fast. Take a week or so to transition into your fast; otherwise it may be difficult on your body. For example, if you would like to go on a fruits and vegetables or juice fast, start eliminating meat, white grains, and refined sugars from your diet the week before. Also you may want to start to cut back on dairy products and some of your caffeine intake.

The same principle applies to breaking your fast. When your fast is over, add foods back in very gradually. You won't want to break your fast with a greasy cheeseburger!

The goal for this 21-day fast is that you would experience a new intimacy in your relationship with God. As you prepare to begin, we encourage you to prepare your heart spiritually. The foundation for fasting and prayer is repentance. Unconfessed sin can hinder your prayers.

spiritual preparation

Here are several things you can do to prepare your heart:

- Remember that God is your Father and He loves you and is for you.
- Confess every sin that the Holy Spirit calls to your remembrance and accept God's forgiveness (1 John 1:9).
- Seek forgiveness from people whom you have offended, and forgive those who have hurt you (Mark 11:25; Luke 11:4; 17:3,4).
- Ask God to fill you with His Holy Spirit according to his command in Ephesians 5:18 and His promise in 1 John 5:14,15.
- Surrender your life fully to Jesus Christ as your Lord; refuse to obey your worldly nature (Romans 12:1,2).
- Begin your time of fasting and prayer with an expectant heart (Hebrews 11:6).
- Do not underestimate spiritual opposition. Satan sometimes intensifies the natural battle between body and spirit (Galatians 5:16,17).

final fasting tips:

- Keep your fridge and pantry stocked with the items you need. Being unprepared to fast sets you up to give into temptation.
- Make it a priority to attend church during your 21-day fast. Being around other believers will encourage you to keep on going when fasting gets difficult.
- If you are fasting with others, you may want to meet together in a small-group setting. You can share what God is showing you in your devotional time as well as spend time in prayer together.
- If you mess up, don't get discouraged. Just get right back on track and keep going. God's mercies "are new every morning" (Lamentations 3:22-23). He wants you to finish, and He will give you the grace and strength to do it!

If you sincerely humble yourself before the Lord, repent, pray, and seek God's face; if you consistently meditate on His word, you will experience a heightened awareness of His presence (John 14:21). The Lord will give you fresh, new spiritual insights. Your confidence and faith in God will be strengthened and you will feel refreshed. Our prayer is that this will be a significant time in your life where you experience God's presence like never before!

resources available

We are so excited to be participating together as a whole church in this fasting experience. We are joining together with one heart and one purpose as we seek God during this time.

During the month of January, you'll find copies of the devotional guides and resources for participating in our 21-day fasting and prayer experience. You'll also find helpful resources on prayer, scripture reading, fasting and more.

As you complete these next 21 days we anticipate God doing a mighty work in your life. We would love for you to share with us stories of how God is speaking to you and working in you. You can do that through our resources website as well.

the daniel fast devotional

This adult devotional is designed to guide you through your 21-day fasting experience. Readings are provided for each day along with a suggested prayer. We encourage you to carve out time in your day to be with God. The goal of fasting is not just that we disconnect from the world, it is that we connect with God.

The first two weeks of devotions will focus on aspects of prayer and fasting. The remaining week will focus on the sacrifice Jesus Christ made for our sins through His death on the cross and the victory we have through His resurrection.

If you are part of a small group, we encourage you to talk about what you are experiencing as you study the Word and pray in the coming weeks. It would be great for your group to commit to participating in fasting together.

All scripture passages are from the New International Version unless otherwise noted. Devotional materials were adapted from *Awakening Devotional 2010* by Celebration Church and *Bright Sadness* by David Maddalena.

day 1: tune in

John 10:22-30: Then came the Festival of Dedication at Jerusalem. It was winter, and Jesus was in the temple courts walking in Solomon's Colonnade. The Jews who were there gathered around him, saying, "How long will you keep us in suspense? If you are the Messiah, tell us plainly." "My sheep hear My voice, and I know them, and they follow Me." Jesus answered,

"I did tell you, but you do not believe. The works I do in my Father's name testify about me, but you do not believe because you are not my sheep. My sheep listen to my voice; I know them, and they follow me. I give them eternal life, and they shall never perish; no one will snatch them out of my hand. My Father, who has given them to me, is greater than all; no one can snatch them out of my Father's hand. I and the Father are one."

Have you ever been searching for a radio station only to be frustrated by finding static rather than music? You then focus to fine tune the dial again, and suddenly you hear a clear signal. The fact is, the signal always existed on the airwaves; the only difference is that now you have adjusted your tuner to the right frequency.

In our hectic lives, there are so many signals bombarding our senses that it can become difficult to distinguish God's voice from the deafening "static noise" of life. Fasting enables us to tune out the world's distractions and tune in to God. As we fast, we deny our flesh. When we deny our flesh, we become more in tune to the Holy Spirit and can hear God's voice more clearly. If you truly listen for God's voice, you will hear it. When you hear it, it will build faith within you.

If you desire to tune out the static of life and really tune into the voice of God, come to Him first and foremost with ears that are

willing to listen and a heart that is ready to obey what he says. (Psalm 34:18, Isaiah 66:2) The more we practice being in His presence, the clearer and more recognizable His voice becomes.

- In this time of fasting, what is your mind tuned to?
- What distractions do you need to remove so that you can focus on God?
- Prepare your heart to hear the voice of God, and ask God to help you remove distractions that keep you from focusing on Him and hearing Him clearly.

additional reading:

Psalm 34:18: The Lord is near to the brokenhearted and saves those who are crushed in spirit.

Isaiah 66:2: Has not my hand made all these things, and so they came into being?" declares the Lord. "These are the ones I look on with favor: those who are humble and contrite in spirit, and who tremble at my word.

Isaiah 64:8: Yet you, Lord, are our Father. We are the clay, you are the potter; we are all the work of your hand.

hymn:

Take Time to be Holy, by William D. Longstaff

Take time to be holy, speak oft with thy Lord;
Abide in Him always, and feed on His Word.
Make friends of God's children, help those who are weak,

Forgetting in nothing His blessing to seek.

Take time to be holy, the world rushes on;
Spend much time in secret, with Jesus alone.
By looking to Jesus, like Him thou shalt be;
Thy friends in thy conduct His likeness shall see.

Take time to be holy, let Him be thy Guide;
And run not before Him, whatever betide.
In joy or in sorrow, still follow the Lord, And,
looking to Jesus, still trust in His Word.

Take time to be holy, be calm in thy soul,
Each thought and each motive beneath His control.
Thus led by His Spirit to fountains of love,
Thou soon shalt be fitted for service above.

prayer:

Lord, help me to tune in to You. As distractions and temptations come, give me strength to turn to You. Teach me. Give me eyes and ears to hear Your voice. Open my heart to Your Word. As I'm challenged in the days ahead, please give me what I need to humble myself and honor You. Help me to take time to be holy, to spend time with You in secret, to trust in Your Word. You are the potter. I am the clay. Mold me and make me according to Your will. Thank You for being a God who I can trust. You are so faithful to me. I am Yours.

journal

day 2: unwavering in faith

James 1:2-7: Consider it pure joy, my brothers and sisters, whenever you face trials of many kinds, because you know that the testing of your faith produces perseverance. Let perseverance finish its work so that you may be mature and complete, not lacking anything. 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. But when you ask, you must believe and not doubt, because the one who doubts is like a wave of the sea, blown and tossed by the wind. That person should not expect to receive anything from the Lord.

What do you expect when you pray? When we pray with earnest expectation, we are exercising our faith. The earnest prayers of people walking in step with God can produce powerful results, and the most earnest prayers come from us recognizing our need for God.

There can be a natural tendency to shrink back when praying for the seemingly impossible, but we must remember that nothing is impossible with God. If we know the promises that God has given us, and understand His character and the principles by which He works, we can pray with confidence and trust Him for the answer. The Kings James Version of the Bible refers to it as being “unwavering in your faith.” What has caused you to waver in your expectation with God? James reminds us that faith and wavering are actually contradictory – he says “nothing wavering”. Know that God never wavers in His love for you. You can trust Him completely.

- What are you trusting God for in this season?
- How can you line up your expectations with the Word of God when you pray?

- Find promises in His Word that answer your need and write them down today.

additional reading:

Matthew 17:20: He replied, “Because you have so little faith. Truly I tell you, if you have faith as small as a mustard seed, you can say to this mountain, ‘Move from here to there,’ and it will move. Nothing will be impossible for you.”

Romans 8:28: And we know that in all things God works for the good of those who love him, who have been called according to his purpose.

Romans 12:2: 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.

prayer:

Lord, please help me to stand firm in my faith as I walk with You. You are my strong tower. I know I can trust in You. Guard and renew my mind, body, soul and spirit in Christ Jesus according to Your will. May each one line up with the Word of God. May my life be filled with faith and expectation that You are working all things for good. Give me faith to move mountains, knowing that You have promised to do the impossible so that You may be glorified. May my life, thoughts and expectations reflect Yours, my King and my God.

journal

Journal writing area with horizontal lines for text entry.

day 10. clean house

Romans 8:5-6: For those who live according to the flesh, set their minds on the things of the flesh, but those who live according to the Spirit, the things of the Spirit. For to be carnally minded is death, but to be spiritually minded is life and peace.

Have you ever looked up at your ceiling fan blades or in the deep recesses of your couch cushions and noticed the filth that builds up over time? Even though we might clean on a regular basis, there are times when we need to go... a little deeper. We realize that what appeared to be clean on the surface was in all actuality, quite filthy.

The same thing can happen spiritually. As we go about our daily lives, there are things that can build up over time. Even if we regularly worship, pray and read our Bible, the different pressures and cares of this world can quietly build up, and end up consuming our lives. Without even realizing it, we can lose our peace, our joy, and our passion for the things of God. Our service to God, which used to fill us with life and excitement, becomes a duty that we must fulfill.

Fasting is the deep cleaning that helps us take our mind off of the things of this world and instead have a refreshed focus on the things of the Spirit. It is an incredibly effective way to get into the nooks and crannies of our soul and bring all those dusty old habits, broken mindsets and rusty attitudes out into the light of God's truth. In fasting and prayer, our service to God returns to something we want to do rather than something we have to do.

As you pray and fast today, ask God to show you any areas where you could use a refreshed spiritual focus. Like David, in Psalm 51:10-12, pray that God will cleanse your heart, renew your spirit, and restore the

joy of your salvation. Pray with confidence, knowing that He wants to fill you with His life and peace.

additional reading:

Psalm 51:

- 1 Have mercy on me, O God, according to your unfailing love; according to your great compassion blot out my transgressions.
- 2 Wash away all my iniquity and cleanse me from my sin.
- 3 For I know my transgressions, and my sin is always before me.
- 4 Against you, you only, have I sinned and done what is evil in your sight; so you are right in your verdict and justified when you judge.
- 5 Surely I was sinful at birth, sinful from the time my mother conceived me.
- 6 Yet you desired faithfulness even in the womb; you taught me wisdom in that secret place.
- 7 Cleanse me with hyssop, and I will be clean; wash me, and I will be whiter than snow.
- 8 Let me hear joy and gladness; let the bones you have crushed rejoice.
- 9 Hide your face from my sins and blot out all my iniquity.
- 10 Create in me a pure heart, O God, and renew a steadfast spirit within me.
- 11 Do not cast me from your presence or take your Holy Spirit from me.

12 Restore to me the joy of your salvation and grant me a willing spirit, to sustain me.

13 Then I will teach transgressors your ways, so that sinners will turn back to you.

14 Deliver me from the guilt of bloodshed, O God, you who are God my Savior, and my tongue will sing of your righteousness.

15 Open my lips, Lord, and my mouth will declare your praise.

16 You do not delight in sacrifice, or I would bring it; you do not take pleasure in burnt offerings.

17 My sacrifice, O God, is [b] a broken spirit; a broken and contrite heart you, God, will not despise.

18 May it please you to prosper Zion, to build up the walls of Jerusalem.

19 Then you will delight in the sacrifices of the righteous, in burnt offerings offered whole; then bulls will be offered on your altar.

Psalm 139

1 You have searched me, LORD, and you know me.

2 You know when I sit and when I rise; you perceive my thoughts from afar.

3 You discern my going out and my lying down; you are familiar with all my ways.

4 Before a word is on my tongue you, LORD, know it completely.

5 You hem me in behind and before, and you lay your hand upon me.

6 Such knowledge is too wonderful for me, too lofty for me to attain.

7 Where can I go from your Spirit? Where can I flee from your presence?

8 If I go up to the heavens, you are there; if I make my bed in the depths, you are there.

9 If I rise on the wings of the dawn, if I settle on the far side of the sea,

10 even there your hand will guide me, your right hand will hold me fast.

11 If I say, "Surely the darkness will hide me and the light become night around me,"

12 even the darkness will not be dark to you; the night will shine like the day, for darkness is as light to you.

13 For you created my inmost being; you knit me together in my mother's womb.

14 I praise you because I am fearfully and wonderfully made; your works are wonderful, I know that full well.

15 My frame was not hidden from you when I was made in the secret place, when I was woven together in the depths of the earth.

16 Your eyes saw my unformed body; all the days ordained for me were written in your book before one of them came to be.

17 How precious to me are your thoughts, [a] God! How vast is the sum of them!

18 Were I to count them, they would outnumber the grains of sand— when I awake, I am still with you.

19 If only you, God, would slay the wicked! Away from me, you who are bloodthirsty!

20 They speak of you with evil intent; your adversaries misuse your name.

day 11. what's your assignment?

Luke 4:1-2, 14-15: Jesus, full of the Holy Spirit, returned from the Jordan and was led by the Spirit in the desert, where for forty days He was tempted by the devil. He ate nothing during those days, and at the end of them He was hungry...Jesus returned to Galilee in the power of the Spirit, and news about Him spread through the whole countryside. He taught in their synagogues, and everyone praised Him.

Fasting and prayer are helpful to receiving a clear vision of God's specific path for our lives. Many times following a season of prayer and fasting we can have a more defined understanding of the part that we play in the body of Christ and a greater sense of our particular spiritual giftings. (1 Corinthians 12)

This chapter in the Gospel of Luke describes the circumstances surrounding the beginning of Jesus' public ministry. Notice that He went into the desert "full of the Holy Spirit." However, He returned to Galilee, "in the power of the Holy Spirit." Being full of the Spirit is knowing God and his character; walking in the power of the Spirit is when we know that we have the God-given strength and authority in our lives to walk out His will.

The power of the Spirit is essential for us to accomplish the assignment God has for our lives. God could be leading you to fast so that you can receive His specific instructions for your life. He will empower you, not just to know Him, but to walk in His power to accomplish what He has called you to do.

- Are there areas of your life that need more clarity?
- Are you walking in the power of the Spirit and living in God's purpose for your life? Write down those things God is speaking to you.

- As you continue your fast, pray that God continually reveals His purpose and gives you ever increasing clarity and strength to walk it out.

additional reading:

Psalms 37:3-7: Trust in the LORD and do good; dwell in the land and enjoy safe pasture. Take delight in the LORD, and he will give you the desires of your heart. Commit your way to the LORD; trust in him and he will do this: He will make your righteous reward shine like the dawn, your vindication like the noonday sun. Be still before the LORD and wait patiently for him; do not fret when people succeed in their ways, when they carry out their wicked schemes.

Isaiah 48:17-18: This is what the LORD says— your Redeemer, the Holy One of Israel: I am the LORD your God, who teaches you what is best for you, who directs you in the way you should go. If only you had paid attention to my commands, your peace would have been like a river, your well-being like the waves of the sea.

Romans 1:1-2: 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.

prayer:

Holy Spirit, thank You that Your power lives within me. I want to live more in Your power, so I ask that You come into my soul and fill me again. I do not want any sin in my life to block You, so I ask You cleanse my heart.

I know You have a purpose for my life, but I don't always know what that is. I ask for a clear calling and discernment as I desire to live out the assignment You have given me. Thank You that when You call me to something, You also completely equip me. I pray that You alone will work through me and that others will see You in me. Thank You for choosing me and giving me a purpose. May my life shine brightly for You!

journal

day 14. alignment with heaven

Matthew 6:10 (KJV): “Thy kingdom come, Thy will be done on earth, as it is in heaven.”

We have all heard the phrase, “just like heaven on earth.” When Jesus taught His disciples how to pray, in Matthew 6:9-13, He provided some insight into what “heaven on earth” might look like. In reality, heaven is a place where God’s will reigns supreme. If we want to have a taste of heaven on earth, then our prayer should be like Jesus’: “Thy kingdom come, Thy will be done...” The purest motivation for our prayers is that God will be glorified and that His will would reign supreme in our lives, just like it does in heaven.

On a more personal level, we can pray that His will be unhindered in our own lives. Rather than imposing His will upon us, God gives us the choice to surrender to it with trust and gladness. As we yield to the Lordship of Christ over every area of our lives, we come into agreement with Him. We experience alignment with heaven and position ourselves to taste a little bit of heaven here on earth. His will then becomes what we desire and the thing we most seek after. We enter into the incredible adventure of participating in God’s plan to move His kingdom forward on the earth. This is where we find the most fulfilling and joyous life, but it all starts with one, personal “yes, Lord” on our part.

- What does God’s will “on earth as it is in heaven” look like in your life?
- Do the desires of your heart line up with the will of God?
- As we seek God together, let’s pray as Jesus taught us, “Thy kingdom come, Thy will be done.”

additional reading:

Isaiah 58:1-12 For day after day they seek me out; they seem eager to know my ways, as if they were a nation that does what is right and has not forsaken the commands of its God. They ask me for just decisions and seem eager for God to come near them. ‘Why have we fasted,’ they say, ‘and you have not seen it? Why have we humbled ourselves, and you have not noticed?’ “Yet on the day of your fasting, you do as you please and exploit all your workers. Your fasting ends in quarreling and strife, and in striking each other with wicked fists. You cannot fast as you do today and expect your voice to be heard on high. Is this the kind of fast I have chosen, only a day for people to humble themselves? Is it only for bowing one’s head like a reed and for lying in sackcloth and ashes? Is that what you call a fast, a day acceptable to the LORD? “Is not this the kind of fasting I have chosen: to loose the chains of injustice and untie the cords of the yoke, to set the oppressed free and break every yoke? Is it not to share your food with the hungry and to provide the poor wanderer with shelter— when you see the naked, to clothe them, and not to turn away from your own flesh and blood? Then your light will break forth like the dawn, and your healing will quickly appear; then your righteousness[a] will go before you, and the glory of the LORD will be your rear guard. Then you will call, and the LORD will answer; you will cry for help, and he will say: Here am I. “If you do away with the yoke of oppression, with the pointing finger and malicious talk, and if you spend yourselves in behalf of the hungry and satisfy the needs of the oppressed, then your light will rise in the darkness, and your night will become like the noonday. The LORD will guide you always; he will satisfy your needs in a sun-scorched land and will

strengthen your frame. You will be like a well-watered garden, like a spring whose waters never fail. Your people will rebuild the ancient ruins and will raise up the age-old foundations; you will be called Repairer of Broken Walls, Restorer of Streets with Dwellings.

James 1:27: Religion that God our Father accepts as pure and faultless is this: to look after orphans and widows in their distress and to keep oneself from being polluted by the world.

prayer:

Father, Your word is very clear about what Your will is. You desire for us to reach out to the lonely, oppressed, marginalized and lost. You have great compassion on them and desire us to be Your hands and feet. Please help my will to line up with Yours. Please enable me to care about others being lost more than I care about the comforts or problems in my life. May Your kingdom come, may Your will be done on earth as it is in heaven. And may I be willing to bring Your kingdom to earth by the way I treat others around me. Please open my eyes to who You want me to bless today.

journal

day 16. pride and humility

Our godliness can often be measured by the line between our pride and humility. Scripture tells us that God has placed a spirit of "fierce desires" in us. Pride can ignite these God-given desires into an occasion for doing wrong. Humility, on the other hand, makes room for God, who tempers and directs our desires, and guides us to lasting fulfillment.

Scripture tells us that Jesus humbled Himself and was obedient to the point of death, even death on a cross (a more humiliating event could not have been imagined). So we practice humility as a way to follow Jesus, and to cast off all our ineffective, prideful attempts at self-promotion, self-salvation and self-satisfaction.

When we remember that Jesus' death is our only hope, and that all our efforts to save ourselves are at best short-term solutions and doomed to fail, we weep for our condition. But we also need to remember that humiliation and remorse, both appropriate responses to God, are temporary. Through Christ's resurrection, the humble are lifted up, and those who mourn are comforted with an everlasting comfort.

James 4:1-10: What causes fights and quarrels among you? Don't they come from your desires that battle within you? You desire but do not have, so you kill. You covet but you cannot get what you want, so you quarrel and fight. You do not have because you do not ask God. When you ask, you do not receive, because you ask with wrong motives, that you may spend what you get on your pleasures. You adulterous people, don't you know that friendship with the world means enmity against God? Therefore, anyone who chooses to be a friend of the world becomes an enemy of God. Or do you think Scripture says without reason that he

jealously longs for the spirit he has caused to dwell in us? But he gives us more grace. That is why Scripture says: "God opposes the proud but shows favor to the humble." Submit yourselves, then, to God. Resist the devil, and he will flee from you. Come near to God and he will come near to you. Wash your hands, you sinners, and purify your hearts, you double-minded. Grieve, mourn and wail. Change your laughter to mourning and your joy to gloom. Humble yourselves before the Lord, and he will lift you up.

John 16:19-22 (NRSV): (Jesus speaks to his disciples before his death) "Very truly, I tell you, you will weep and mourn... you will have pain, but your pain will turn into joy. When a woman is in labor, she has pain, because her hour has come. But when her child is born, she no longer remembers the anguish because of the joy of having brought a human being into the world. So you have pain now; but I will see you again, and your hearts will rejoice, and no one will take your joy from you.

Psalms 23:1-6 (NLT): A psalm of David. The LORD is my shepherd; I have everything I need. He lets me rest in green meadows; he leads me beside peaceful streams. He renews my strength. He guides me along right paths, bringing honor to his name. Even when I walk through the dark valley of death, I will not be afraid, for you are close beside me. Your rod and your staff protect and comfort me. You prepare a feast for me in the presence of my enemies. You welcome me as a guest, anointing my head with oil. My cup overflows with blessings. Surely your goodness and unfailing love will pursue me all the days of my life, and I will live in the house of the LORD forever.

- In what area of your life or in what relationship do you need to ask God to

grant you humility?

- Is there someone you need to humbly approach and ask for forgiveness?
- Is there an area you need to surrender to God and no longer seek your will, but to trust in Him for His will to be done?

prayer:

God grant me the ability to see myself as You see me. Yet protect me from what I find in my own heart, for surely it is more awful than I can bear. Forgive me, and carry my burden of grief when I see my failings. And God, don't let me take credit for the good things You have given me. In Your mercy help me to see the pride in my own heart. Heal and renew my spirit; refine the passion of my heart; and help me to walk in humility.

journal

day 17. passion for God

The day Jesus entered Jerusalem before His death and resurrection is known as Palm Sunday. This marks the beginning of the week of Christ's passion. The word 'passion' comes from a Latin word which means 'suffering'. The suffering of Jesus Christ on the cross has always been referred to as The Passion. There is even a movie by that name. In modern times, we have come to apply the word passion to mean any kind of strong feeling, or commitment, even though it more properly it describes a suffering for some worthwhile thing.

In many ways we have lost this sense of the word, in part perhaps, because there is so little of this kind of passion left in the western world. We ascribe the word passion to how we feel about sports teams, music, or our political views. Would you be willing to suffer for those things?

How different is the passion of Jesus: directed by God and willingly accepted. Jesus actively chose His path and the sufferings that followed. In Jesus we see not only the full depth of God's passion for us and the suffering that was a necessary part of it, but also the full depth of one perfect human's passion for God (in Jesus): obedience that led to death.

How do we respond to God's call to follow Him? Are we passionate? Or passive? To walk with Jesus, who said, "take up your cross and follow me," we must accept God's direction and choose to follow the path laid out for us. This is a path of certain passion (suffering), but also certain hope because of the victory we have through Christ's resurrection.

Matthew 10:24-32, 38-39 (TEV): (Jesus teaches his disciples) "No pupil is greater than his teacher; no slave is greater than his master. So a pupil should be satisfied to become like his teacher, and a slave like

his master. If the head of the family is called Beelzebul, the members of the family will be called even worse names! So do not be afraid of people. Whatever is now covered up will be uncovered, and every secret will be made known. What I am telling you in the dark you must repeat in broad daylight, and what you have heard in private you must announce from the housetops. Do not be afraid of those who kill the body but cannot kill the soul; rather be afraid of God, who can destroy both body and soul in hell. For only a penny you can buy two sparrows, yet not one sparrow falls to the ground without your Father's consent. As for you, even the hairs of your head have all been counted. So do not be afraid; you are worth much more than many sparrows! Those who declare publicly that they belong to me, I will do the same for them before my Father in heaven. "Those who do not take up their cross and follow in my steps are not fit to be my disciples. Those who try to gain their own life will lose it; but those who lose their life for my sake will gain it."

Psalm 130:1-8 (NLT): A song for the ascent to Jerusalem

From the depths of despair, O LORD, I call for your help. Hear my cry, O Lord. Pay attention to my prayer. LORD, if you kept a record of our sins, who, O Lord, could ever survive? But you offer forgiveness, that we might learn to fear you.

I am counting on the LORD; yes, I am counting on him. I have put my hope in his word. I long for the Lord more than watchmen wait for the morning, yes, more than watchmen wait for the morning. O Israel, hope in the LORD; for with the LORD there is unfailing love and an overflowing supply of salvation. He himself will free Israel from every kind of sin.

• How are you passionate in your love for the Lord?

• In what areas do you actively choose God's ways and desire to live for Him?

• Or, do you passively follow Him?

• In what ways do others look at your life and see your passion and consuming love for Jesus?

• Ask God to enable you to passionately love and follow Him.

prayer:

Lord, thank You for Your passionate love for me that You would die for me. And thank You for Your passionate love for the Father, that You would obey Him, even to death. Lord, I am so often harassed and helpless, like a sheep without a shepherd—how can I find my way unless You help me? Have mercy on me. Lead me Lord. Come, and give me the strength I need to follow You in doing the Father's will. Bless the time I give to You this week. Pour Your blessing over me. Give me a passionate love equal to Yours.

journal

day 18. the suffering Christ

When we think of Jesus' death on the cross we also remember all those who were together with Him in the last days. Imagine being in the disciples' shoes during what was certainly the darkest period of their lives. Through the Scriptures we see Jesus' followers as they fall asleep, betray Him, deny, flee, despair and generally fail to "get it." Imagine what it would have been like for them to watch their friend, mentor, King, their Savior, be arrested, whipped, humiliated, stripped naked, crowned with thorns and hammered to a wooden cross. The week before Christ's death is often referred to as Holy Week and it's reasonable to ask, "If this is Holy Week, what would an unholy week look like?"

The horror of holy week is a stumbling block to the Jews, even for Jesus' own followers. They stumbled on the fact that this "King" was killed by the Romans when He was supposed to be conquering them! Instead of taking the throne, He was nailed to a tree, and forever cursed by it, they thought. But Jesus' way was not their way. He knew that by dying, the Jews could not only be saved from the perceived tyranny of any military power, but from a far worse tyranny, that of sin and evil. Jesus chose the path of suffering and death so that they—and we—could be free forever from the punishment due to us because of the evil in our hearts. He took our place on the cross. If we are able to "get" this truth, then suffering and death are no threat to us, whether at the hands of a Roman soldier, or in the hand of a just God. We don't need to fear death because of what Jesus did.

Because of Jesus' suffering, we also have an advocate when we suffer. No matter what we are going through, no matter how tough or terrorizing, one thing is sure: Jesus understands. He has endured far worse, for our sake. When we are tempted to look up

out of the dark holes we find ourselves in, to search the heavens and call out to God—we may wonder, "Where is God and why won't he rescue me?" Consider for a moment that Jesus doesn't gaze down at you from some great throne in Heaven. No. He is beneath you, waiting for you to let go and fall back into His arms. Jesus has experienced the limit of suffering and He is able to meet you where you are.

There is no depth of despair to which we can ever descend that is lower than Jesus went when He died under the weight of a world full of evil. But no matter how low we have been, don't doubt that if we are found in Jesus when He ascends on Easter day, then we will rise with Him, and will have no reason to fear death again.

Isaiah 52:13-53:12 (NLT): (This passage foretells the Passion of Jesus by more than six hundred years.)

See, my servant will prosper; he will be highly exalted. Many were amazed when they saw him – beaten and bloodied, so disfigured one would scarcely know he was a person. And he will again startle many nations. Kings will stand speechless in his presence. For they will see what they had not previously been told about; they will understand what they had not heard about.

Who has believed our message? To whom will the LORD reveal his saving power? My servant grew up in the LORD's presence like a tender green shoot, sprouting from a root in dry and sterile ground. There was nothing beautiful or majestic about his appearance, nothing to attract us to him. He was despised and rejected – a man of sorrows, acquainted with bitterest grief. We turned our backs on him and looked the other way when he went by. He was despised, and we did not care. Yet it was

our weaknesses he carried; it was our sorrows that weighed him down. And we thought his troubles were a punishment from God for his own sins! But he was wounded and crushed for our sins. He was beaten that we might have peace. He was whipped, and we were healed! All of us have strayed away like sheep. We have left God's paths to follow our own. Yet the LORD laid on him the guilt and sins of us all. He was oppressed and treated harshly, yet he never said a word. He was led as a lamb to the slaughter. And as a sheep is silent before the shearers, he did not open his mouth. From prison and trial they led him away to his death. But who among the people realized that he was dying for their sins – that he was suffering their punishment? He had done no wrong, and he never deceived anyone. But he was buried like a criminal; he was put in a rich man's grave.

But it was the LORD's good plan to crush him and fill him with grief. Yet when his life is made an offering for sin, he will have a multitude of children, many heirs. He will enjoy a long life, and the LORD's plan will prosper in his hands. When he sees all that is accomplished by his anguish, he will be satisfied. And because of what he has experienced, my righteous servant will make it possible for many to be counted righteous, for he will bear all their sins. I will give him the honors of one who is mighty and great, because he exposed himself to death. He was counted among those who were sinners. He bore the sins of many and interceded for sinners.

1 Peter 1:3-9: Praise be to the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ! In his great mercy he has given us new birth into a living hope through the resurrection of Jesus Christ from the dead, and into an inheritance that can never perish, spoil or fade. This inheritance is kept in heaven for you, who through faith are shielded by God's power until the coming of the

salvation that is ready to be revealed in the last time. In all this you greatly rejoice, though now for a little while you may have had to suffer grief in all kinds of trials. These have come so that the proven genuineness of your faith—of greater worth than gold, which perishes even though refined by fire—may result in praise, glory and honor when Jesus Christ is revealed. Though you have not seen him, you love him; and even though you do not see him now, you believe in him and are filled with an inexpressible and glorious joy, for you are receiving the end result of your faith, the salvation of your souls.

- Do you fully realize the blessings God has given you because of the offering of Christ?
- Have you claimed the gifts He has given you-- gifts of peace, forgiveness, and righteousness?
- Jesus Christ has made you righteous and accepted in God's eyes. Spend some time thanking Him again for His sacrifice and that your sins are completely forgiven, once and for all. (2 Corinthians 5:21 "God made him who had no sin to be sin for us, so that in him we might become the righteousness of God.")

day 19. love

On the Friday that Jesus died it might seem that the wrath of God has eclipsed the love of God. But it isn't so. Mercy triumphs over Judgment at Easter: love triumphs over wrath.

At the last supper Jesus washed the disciples' feet. He also gave them a new commandment, "Love one another as I have loved You."

But the disciples don't fully comprehend how deeply Jesus has loved them. After all they had been through, it took a king on His knees with a towel around His waist to prove to them the loving, servant heart of God (what if our president, or a king, were to wash the feet of a bunch of fishermen today? What if it were your feet?). But even so, Peter the disciple doesn't understand why Jesus would defile Himself in this way.

If that night Peter finds it hard to accept that Jesus His king would humiliate Himself by washing His followers' feet, he will be even more confounded the next day. For there will be another demonstration of how God loves on Good Friday, when the perfect love of God in Jesus faces the wrath of God against evil, and triumphs in the end. All for the love of us.

John 13:1-15 (NLT): Before the Passover celebration, Jesus knew that his hour had come to leave this world and return to his Father. He now showed the disciples the full extent of his love. It was time for supper, and the Devil had already enticed Judas, son of Simon Iscariot, to carry out his plan to betray Jesus. Jesus knew that the Father had given him authority over everything and that he had come from God and would return to God. So he got up from the table, took off his robe, wrapped a towel around his waist, and poured water into a basin. Then he began to wash the

disciples' feet and to wipe them with the towel he had around him. When he came to Simon Peter, Peter said to him, "Lord, why are you going to wash my feet?" Jesus replied, "You don't understand now why I am doing it; someday you will." "No," Peter protested, "you will never wash my feet!" Jesus replied, "But if I don't wash you, you won't belong to me." Simon Peter exclaimed, "Then wash my hands and head as well, Lord, not just my feet!" Jesus replied, "A person who has bathed all over does not need to wash, except for the feet, to be entirely clean. And you are clean, but that isn't true of everyone here." For Jesus knew who would betray him. That is what he meant when he said, "Not all of you are clean." After washing their feet, he put on his robe again and sat down and asked, "Do you understand what I was doing? You call me 'Teacher' and 'Lord,' and you are right, because it is true. And since I, the Lord and Teacher, have washed your feet, you ought to wash each other's feet. I have given you an example to follow. Do as I have done to you. How true it is that a servant is not greater than the master. Nor are messengers more important than the one who sends them. You know these things – now do them! That is the path of blessing.

Peace is my last gift to you, my own peace I now leave with you; peace which the world cannot give, I give to you. I give you a new commandment: Love one another as I have loved you.

Peace is my last gift to you, my own peace I now leave with you; peace which the world cannot give, I give to you. By this shall the world know that you are my disciples: That you have love for one another. (BCP)

- Are you washed in the love of Jesus?

- Whose feet do you need to wash in humility and love?

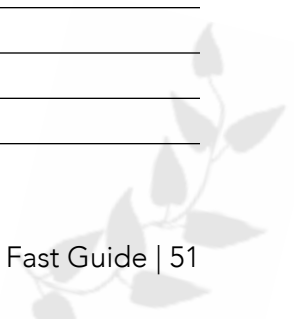
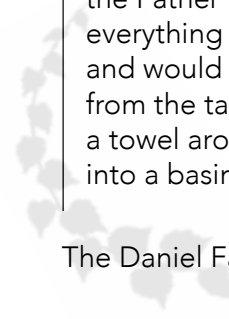
- In what areas of your life and in what relationships do you need His Spirit of love and humility?

- How can you serve others, especially those you are the closest to? How can you grant another the peace He has freely given us?

prayer:

Wash me clean Lord. I want to receive all You have for me. I am blessed and honored when You serve me; I am humbled by Your humility. Help me remember Your healing and cleansing. Don't let me forget my salvation. In darkness help me call on Your name. Jesus. In darkness, be the light of my heart; may I never be afraid. I am longing for Your sunrise, Jesus. In Your mercy, give me the gift of hope. And by Your love, help me to love others. Teach me Your way in the coming days. Help me to understand how You have loved me, and how You love me still.

journal



day 20. darkness falls

Darkness falls over the Earth on Good Friday. God's own Son goes to His death to save us from the darkness in our hearts. While He is walking out this terrifying mission, His followers seem to do everything they can to show how little we humans deserve the favor.

God is a God of Light: He can't tolerate darkness, and darkness cannot survive in His presence. We, who have dark hearts full of sin, should tremble at this fact, but Jesus, who was completely good, took on our sin and stood under the wrath of God.

On the cross, He was destroyed and cut off from His Father. It was to have been our fate. In the midst of humanity's own darkest hour, and in the face of His followers' cowardice, selfishness and laziness, God does not cut us off. In His awesome mercy, He sends His own Son into the darkness so that we might live in the light.

Take some time to meditate on the following scripture passage.

Mark 14.32-15:37 (NLT):

"Take this cup of suffering away from me."

And they came to an olive grove called Gethsemane, and Jesus said, "Sit here while I go and pray." He took Peter, James, and John with him, and he began to be filled with horror and deep distress. He told them, "My soul is crushed with grief to the point of death. Stay here and watch with me." He went on a little farther and fell face down on the ground. He prayed that, if it were possible, the awful hour awaiting him might pass him by. "Abba, Father," he said, "Everything is possible for you. Please take this cup of suffering away from me. Yet I want your will, not mine." Then he returned and found the disciples asleep. "Simon!" he said to Peter. "Are you asleep? Couldn't

you stay awake and watch with me even one hour? Keep alert and pray. Otherwise temptation will overpower you. For though the spirit is willing enough, the body is weak." Then Jesus left them again and prayed, repeating his pleadings. Again he returned to them and found them sleeping, for they just couldn't keep their eyes open. And they didn't know what to say. When he returned to them the third time, he said, "Still sleeping? Still resting? Enough! The time has come. I, the Son of Man, am betrayed into the hands of sinners. Up, let's be going. See, my betrayer is here!"

A kiss and a sword

And immediately, as he said this, Judas, one of the twelve disciples, arrived with a mob that was armed with swords and clubs. They had been sent out by the leading priests, the teachers of religious law, and the other leaders. Judas had given them a prearranged signal: "You will know which one to arrest when I go over and give him the kiss of greeting. Then you can take him away under guard." As soon as they arrived, Judas walked up to Jesus. "Teacher!" he exclaimed, and gave him the kiss. Then the others grabbed Jesus and arrested him. But someone pulled out a sword and slashed off an ear of the high priest's servant. Jesus asked them, "Am I some dangerous criminal, that you come armed with swords and clubs to arrest me? Why didn't you arrest me in the Temple? I was there teaching every day. But these things are happening to fulfill what the Scriptures say about me." Meanwhile, all his disciples deserted him and ran away. There was a young man following along behind, clothed only in a linen nightshirt. When the mob tried to grab him, they tore off his clothes, but he escaped and ran away naked.

False witnesses

Jesus was led to the high priest's home where the leading priests, other leaders, and teachers of religious law had gathered. Meanwhile, Peter followed far behind and then slipped inside the gates of the high priest's courtyard. For a while he sat with the guards, warming himself by the fire. Inside, the leading priests and the entire high council were trying to find witnesses who would testify against Jesus, so they could put him to death. But their efforts were in vain. Many false witnesses spoke against him, but they contradicted each other. Finally, some men stood up to testify against him with this lie: "We heard him say, 'I will destroy this Temple made with human hands, and in three days I will build another, made without human hands.'" But even then they didn't get their stories straight! Then the high priest stood up before the others and asked Jesus, "Well, aren't you going to answer these charges? What do you have to say for yourself?" Jesus made no reply. Then the high priest asked him, "Are you the Messiah, the Son of the blessed God?" Jesus said, "I am, and you will see me, the Son of Man, sitting at God's right hand in the place of power and coming back on the clouds of heaven." Then the high priest tore his clothing to show his horror and said, "Why do we need other witnesses? You have all heard his blasphemy. What is your verdict?" And they all condemned him to death. Then some of them began to spit at him, and they blindfolded him and hit his face with their fists. "Who hit you that time, you prophet?" they jeered. And even the guards were hitting him as they led him away.

"I don't know this man ..."

Meanwhile, Peter was below in the courtyard. One of the servant girls who worked for the high priest noticed Peter warming himself at the fire. She looked at him closely and then said, "You were one

of those with Jesus, the Nazarene." Peter denied it. "I don't know what you're talking about," he said, and he went out into the entryway. Just then, a rooster crowed. The servant girl saw him standing there and began telling the others, "That man is definitely one of them!" Peter denied it again. A little later some other bystanders began saying to Peter, "You must be one of them because you are from Galilee." Peter said, "I swear by God, I don't know this man you're talking about." And immediately the rooster crowed the second time. Suddenly, Jesus' words flashed through Peter's mind: "Before the rooster crows twice, you will deny me three times." And he broke down and cried.

"Crucify Him!"

Very early in the morning the leading priests, other leaders, and teachers of religious law – the entire high council – met to discuss their next step. They bound Jesus and took him to Pilate, the Roman governor. Pilate asked Jesus, "Are you the King of the Jews?" Jesus replied, "Yes, it is as you say." Then the leading priests accused him of many crimes, and Pilate asked him, "Aren't you going to say something? What about all these charges against you?" But Jesus said nothing, much to Pilate's surprise. Now it was the governor's custom to release one prisoner each year at Passover time – anyone the people requested. One of the prisoners at that time was Barabbas, convicted along with others for murder during an insurrection. The mob began to crowd in toward Pilate, asking him to release a prisoner as usual. "Should I give you the King of the Jews?" Pilate asked. (For he realized by now that the leading priests had arrested Jesus out of envy.) But at this point the leading priests stirred up the mob to demand the release of Barabbas instead of Jesus. "But if I release Barabbas," Pilate asked them, "what should I do with this man you call the King of the Jews?" They

shouted back, “Crucify him!” “Why?” Pilate demanded. “What crime has he committed? ”But the crowd only roared the louder, “Crucify him!”

“Hail! King of the Jews!”

So Pilate, anxious to please the crowd, released Barabbas to them. He ordered Jesus flogged with a lead-tipped whip, then turned him over to the Roman soldiers to crucify him. The soldiers took him into their headquarters and called out the entire battalion. They dressed him in a purple robe and made a crown of long, sharp thorns and put it on his head. Then they saluted, yelling, “Hail! King of the Jews!” And they beat him on the head with a stick, spit on him, and dropped to their knees in mock worship. When they were finally tired of mocking him, they took off the purple robe and put his own clothes on him again. Then they led him away to be crucified. A man named Simon, who was from Cyrene, was coming in from the country just then, and they forced him to carry Jesus’ cross. And they brought Jesus to a place called Golgotha (which means Skull Hill). They offered him wine drugged with myrrh, but he refused it. Then they nailed him to the cross. They gambled for his clothes, throwing dice to decide who would get them. It was nine o’clock in the morning when the crucifixion took place. A signboard was fastened to the cross above Jesus’ head, announcing the charge against him. It read: “The King of the Jews.” Two criminals were crucified with him, their crosses on either side of his. And the people passing by shouted abuse, shaking their heads in mockery. “Ha! Look at you now!” they yelled at him. “You can destroy the Temple and rebuild it in three days, can you? Well then, save yourself and come down from the cross!” The leading priests and teachers of religious law also mocked Jesus. “He saved others,” they scoffed, “but he can’t save himself! Let this Messiah, this king of Israel, come down from the

cross so we can see it and believe him!” Even the two criminals who were being crucified with Jesus ridiculed him.

And darkness fell

At noon, darkness fell across the whole land until three o’clock. Then, at that time Jesus called out with a loud voice, “Eloi, Eloi, lema sabachthani?” which means, “My God, my God, why have you forsaken me?” Some of the bystanders misunderstood and thought he was calling for the prophet Elijah. One of them ran and filled a sponge with sour wine, holding it up to him on a stick so he could drink. “Leave him alone. Let’s see whether Elijah will come and take him down!” he said. Then Jesus uttered another loud cry and breathed his last. And the curtain in the Temple was torn in two, from top to bottom.

prayer topics

Please spend some time praying for the following:

- Our heavenly Father sent His Son into the world, not to condemn the world, but that the world through Him might be saved; that all who believes in Him might be delivered from the power of sin and death, and become heirs with Him of everlasting life.
- Pray, therefore, for people everywhere according to their needs.
- Pray for the Church of Christ throughout the world;
- For its unity in witness and service
- For all ministers and the people whom they serve
- For all Christians in this community

- That God will confirm His Church in faith, increase it in love and preserve it in peace.

- Pray for all nations and peoples of the earth, and for those in authority among them; for all who serve the common good, that by God’s help they may seek justice and truth, and live in peace.

- Pray for all who suffer and are afflicted in body or in mind;

- For the hungry and the homeless, the destitute and the oppressed

- For the sick, the wounded and the crippled

- For those in loneliness, fear and anguish

- For those who face temptation, doubt and despair

- For the sorrowful and bereaved

- For prisoners and captives, and those in mortal danger

- That God in His mercy will comfort and relieve them, and grant them the knowledge of His love, and stir up in us the will and patience to minister to their needs.

- Pray for all who have not received the Gospel of Christ;

- For those who have never heard the word of salvation

- For those who have lost their faith

- For those hardened by sin or indifference

- For the contemptuous and the scornful

- For those who are enemies of the cross of Christ and persecutors of his disciples

- For those who in the name of Christ have persecuted others

- That God will open their hearts to the truth, and lead them to faith and obedience.

prayer:

O God of unchanging power and eternal light: Look favorably on Your whole church, that wonderful and sacred mystery; by the working of Your providence, carry out Your plan of salvation; let the whole world see and know that things which were cast down are being raised up, things which had grown old are being made new, and that the weak and weary are being made strong. Though sometimes it is hidden to our eyes, these things are being done by the One through whom all things were made, Your Son Jesus Christ our Lord; who lives and reigns with You, in the unity of the Holy Spirit, one God, for ever and ever. Grant us patience, faith, courage, and hope worthy of eternity.

journal

day 21. victory in Christ!

The darkness of Good Friday ends with a flame of light on Easter Sunday. Christ is risen! He is risen indeed!

Matthew 28.1-10; 16-20 (TEV):

After the Sabbath, as Sunday morning was dawning, Mary Magdalene and the other Mary went to look at the tomb. Suddenly there was a violent earthquake; an angel of the Lord came down from heaven, rolled the stone away, and sat on it. His appearance was like lightning, and his clothes were white as snow. The guards were so afraid that they trembled and became like dead men. The angel spoke to the women. "You must not be afraid," he said. "I know you are looking for Jesus, who was crucified. He is not here; he has been raised, just as he said. Come here and see the place where he was lying.

Go quickly now, and tell his disciples, "He has been raised from death, and now he is going to Galilee ahead of you; there you will see him!" Remember what I have told you." So they left the tomb in a hurry, afraid and yet filled with joy, and ran to tell his disciples. Suddenly Jesus met them and said, "Peace be with you." They came up to him, took hold of his feet, and worshiped him. "Do not be afraid," Jesus said to them.

... The eleven disciples went to the hill in Galilee where Jesus had told them to go. When they saw him, they worshiped him, even though some of them doubted. Jesus drew near and said to them, "I have been given all authority in heaven and on earth. Go, then, to all peoples everywhere and make them my disciples: baptize them in the name of the Father, the Son, and the Holy Spirit, and teach them to obey everything I have commanded you. And I will be with you always, to the end of the

age."

Ezekiel 36.24-28 (NRSV):

I will take you from the nations, and gather you from all the countries, and bring you into your own land. I will sprinkle clean water upon you, and you shall be clean from all your uncleannesses, and from all your idols I will cleanse you.

A new heart I will give you, and a new spirit I will put within you; and I will remove from your body the heart of stone and give you a heart of flesh. I will put my spirit within you, and make you follow my statutes and be careful to observe my ordinances. Then you shall live in the land that I gave to your ancestors; and you shall be my people, and I will be your God.

Prayers or the resurrection:

Rejoice now, heavenly hosts and choirs of angels, and let your trumpets shout salvation for the victory of our mighty King! Rejoice and sing now, all the round earth, bright with a glorious splendor, for darkness has been vanquished by our eternal King. Rejoice and be glad now, Oh Church, and in radiant light, resound with the praises of your people.

It is truly right and good, always and everywhere, with our whole heart and mind to praise You, the invisible, almighty, and eternal God, and Your only-begotten Son, Jesus Christ our Lord; for He is the true Lamb, who at the feast of the Passover paid for us the debt of Adam's sin, and by His blood delivered Your faithful people.

This is the night, when all who believe in Christ are delivered from the gloom of sin, and are restored to grace and holiness of life.

This is the night, when Christ broke the bonds of death and hell, and rose victorious from the grave.

How wonderful and beyond our knowing, O God, is your mercy and loving-kindness to us, that to redeem a slave, You gave a Son.

How holy is this night, when wickedness is put to flight, and sin is washed away. It restores innocence to the fallen, and joy to those who mourn. It casts out pride and hatred, and brings peace and concord.

How blessed is this day, when earth and heaven are joined and humankind is reconciled to God!

May the light of Jesus shine continually to drive away all darkness. May Christ, the Morning Star who knows no setting, find His light ever burning in our hearts—He who gives His light to all creation, and who lives and reigns for ever and ever.

- Has this season of prayer and fasting strengthened your relationship with Christ? How?
- Please take the time to write a letter to Jesus about your love for Him and any new revelations He has revealed to you. Also include new commitments you are making.
- How will you live more passionately for Him because of His ultimate sacrifice?
- Commitments might include acts of regular prayer, service to others, and personal disciplines in spending more time with Him.
- Put your letter in an envelope with two dates: today's date and six months from now. Place the envelope in your Bible and open it in six months.

prayer:

Dear Lord, thank You for walking with and sustaining me during this prayer and fasting journey. You have been faithful, and I thank You for what You have shown me. I ask that you seal the work You have done in my life and help me to continue to walk more closely with You. Open your Word in greater ways to me in the days ahead. Teach me, strengthen my faith and give me persistence and boldness in following Your will for me. Help me to be Your hands and feet in service and blessing to others. You are my risen, ascended, reigning and ruling Lord. I humbly thank You and praise Your name. You are awesome!

journal

Speak, O Lord

Speak, O Lord, as we come to You To receive the food of Your Holy Word. Take Your truth, plant it deep in us; Shape and fashion us in Your likeness, That the light of Christ might be seen today In our acts of love and our deeds of faith. Speak, O Lord, and fulfill in us All Your purposes for Your glory.

Teach us, Lord, full obedience, Holy reverence, true humility; Test our thoughts and our attitudes In the radiance of Your purity. Cause our faith to rise; cause our eyes to see Your majestic love and authority.

Words of pow'r that can never fail— Let their truth prevail over unbelief.

Speak, O Lord, and renew our minds; Help us grasp the heights of Your plans for us— Truths unchanged from the dawn of time That will echo down through eternity. And by grace we'll stand on Your promises, And by faith we'll walk as You walk with us. Speak, O Lord, till Your church is built And the earth is filled with Your glory.

“Speak, O Lord” Words and Music by Keith Getty & Stuart Townend

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