DAYS OF

PRAYER + FASTING

DEVOTIONAL GUIDE

Welcome to 21 Days of Prayer and Fasting. My wife, Lydia, and I are excited to see what God is about to do in your life through this time of prayer and devotion! Our hope is for you to develop a whole new way of spending time with God. As we lean into His word, we believe you will see your life change in amazing ways.

As we look back on our 30+ years of ministry, one thing that is so prevalent, is the power of prayer. It has been a standard of our church to make prayer our first response - never allowing it to be a last resort, no matter the situation.

Now, understanding the necessity of prayer is not the only thing you need in a life led by faith. In order for prayer to become a part of our lives, it needs to become something we look forward to doing. Throughout these years of ministry, I have become convinced that most people don't engage in prayer simply because they have never been taught how to pray.

Over the next 21 days, this devotional guide will teach you how to pray, reignite your prayer life, draw you closer to God, or maybe all three. Using the S.O.A.P acrostic breakdown on the next page, together we will journey deeper into our prayers each week. During this time, you'll discover the beauty of daily conversation with God and how His presence can change your life.

Whether you are learning how to pray or are a seasoned vet, we are excited to see where these 21 Days of Prayer and Fasting take our church!

Your Friends,
James & Lydia Ranger

You'll need three items to S.O.A.P each day: a Bible, a pen, and your journal.

S: Scripture
Open your bible to your reading for the day. Take time reading and allow God to speak to you. When you are done, look for a verse that particularly spoke to you that day, and write it in your journal.

O: Observation
What do you think God is saying to you in this scripture? Ask the Holy Spirit to teach you and reveal Jesus to you.

A: Application
Personalize what you have read, by asking yourself how it applies to your life right now. Perhaps it is instruction, encouragement, a new promise, or corrections for a particular area of your life. Write how this scripture can apply to you today.

P: Prayer
This can be as simple as asking God to help you use this scripture, or even a prayer for greater insight on what He may be revealing to you. Remember, prayer is a two-way conversation, so be sure to listen to what God has to say.

DAY 1

Scripture:
After this, the word of the Lord came to Abram in a vision: "Do not be afraid, Abram. I am your shield, your very great reward."
- Genesis 15:1

Observation:
God is reminding Abram in this passage to hold to the promises He has already made to him. Earlier in Genesis, we learn that God called Abram out of his homeland, to an unspecified destination, with the promise of multiplying him into a great nation. But we see Abram's pain in the next verses as he reminds God that he has no child, no heir from which that would even be possible. God's gentle reminder here points Abram back to faith, because God's promises are never limited by the realities that we see.

Application:
God didn't give Abram a clear roadmap, or the step by step plan for His promises. Instead, He calls Abram to trust Him and lean into that which he couldn't see. As we begin this new year, what are some areas in your own life where you no longer see the promises of God because you can only see the realities and limitations of your situation? As we walk into this new decade, let's ask the Lord to clarify our vision and give us eyes to see our lives with the improbable possibilities that can only be accomplished through God.

Prayer:
Lord, thank you for reminding me that I can believe Your word and trust Your promises. As we begin this year, please give me the audacious faith that I need to hold to your word, even when it seems impossible. I trust you, Lord. Thank you that your plans are far greater than I can even imagine. Amen.

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Scripture:
But when you fast, put oil on your head and wash your face, so that it will not be obvious to others that you are fasting, but only to your Father, who is unseen; and your Father, who sees what is done in secret will reward you. - Matthew 6:17-18

Observation:
Jesus is bringing us back to the true purpose of fasting, and calling out the hypocrisy of how the Pharisees fasted. Fasting is a tool of self-denial, meant to acknowledge our dependence on and need for God, and to draw us closer to him through prayer. It is meant to be between us and the Lord, not something that's used to show others how religious we are.

Application:
As we walk through these 21 Days of Prayer and Fasting, is there something that you've felt the Lord stirring in you to fast? It doesn't have to be a big ordeal, like the Pharisee's made it out to be. Sometimes the most impactful fasts are things that are small and private. If you've felt that nudge from God to lay something down that's been distracting you from Him, we would encourage you to go all in over these next 20 days!

Prayer:
Thank you God that you want to draw me closer to you. Help me to surrender the things that are distracting me from what you are wanting to speak to me and do in my life. I want to encounter you in new ways, Jesus.

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DAY 3

Scripture:
Ask and it will be given to you; seek and you will find; knock and the door will be opened to you. For everyone who asks receives; the one who seeks finds; and to the one who knocks, the door will be opened. - Matthew 7:7-8

Observation:
Jesus is reminding us of the power of prayer in these verses. "Ask, seek, knock," could also be stated, "Pray, pray, pray." Earlier in Matthew, Jesus had spoken of our duty to pray. But here He's showing us that it is also the means to every end we could need. He's not just speaking of material things here, either; rather, we should be asking Him for the grace and the means to be the people He has called us to be.

Application:
God wants to be invited into all areas of our lives. Whether it's a tangible need, a place in ourselves that needs growth, or a situation we face that we don't know how to handle, He's given us the tools to access him through prayer. Make it a point to pray throughout your day today. He cares about you!

Prayer:
Jesus, thank you that you are always available to us through prayer. Help me to see the things that I have been holding on to, that you want me to surrender to you in prayer. Thank you for caring about me, and wanting to share in every part of my day. Amen.

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Scripture:
I will give thanks to you, Lord, with all my heart; I will tell of all your wonderful deeds. I will be glad and rejoice in you; I will sing the praises of your name, O Most High.
- Psalm 9:1-2

Observation:
Worship is a decision we make. David in this Psalm is declaring action statements: I will give thanks; I will tell of your deeds; I will rejoice; I will sing.

Application:
At New Life Church, one of our core values is that, "Worship is our life's song." Worship is more than just music. It's the decisions you make every day, to honor the Lord with your attitudes and the things you declare. Music is a part of that, but when we live a life of worship, our lives become like a song that those around us will hear.

Prayer:
Father, I choose to praise You today. Help me to shift my internal dialogue to that which will honor You. I want to worship You in all that I do and say. Amen.

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DAY 5

Scripture:
A man with leprosy came and knelt before him and said, "Lord, if you are willing, you can make me clean." Jesus reached out his hand and touched the man. "I am willing," he said. "Be clean!" Immediately he was cleansed of his leprosy. - Matthew 8:2-3

Observation:
Leper's in the time of Jesus were literally referred to as "the walking dead." The disease would start at the skin with sores, and work its way all the way to the bones of the person. Possibly worse, it also meant death to your relationships, since the culture believed that leprosy was a punishment from God for sin. They would die a slow and horrible death, completely outcast from society. But not with Jesus. Without hesitation He touches the untouchable, in effect resurrecting that man's whole life.

Application:
Jesus doesn't pull back from us. No matter how dirty, broken, and untouchable we may feel, his response is always love. But, like the man with leprosy, we have to be willing to ask him for the healing we need. He's right there, ready to reach out. All we have to do is ask.

Prayer:
Jesus, thank you for always looking at me with love. If there are any areas of my life that I have not invited your healing touch into yet, I ask for that now. Thank you for your mercy on me. Help me also to see others the way you see them, and extend that same grace that is always available to me. Amen.

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Scripture:
Suddenly a furious storm came up on the lake, so that the waves swept over the boat. But Jesus was sleeping.The disciples went and woke him, saying, “Lord, save us! We’re going to drown!”
- Matthew 8:24-25

Observation:
Jesus doesn’t react to the storm like his disciples do. He was undoubtedly aware of the storm’s existence, but chose to keep resting in the midst of it. It also provided a situation for his disciples to grow their faith. They saw imminent danger, but he saw an opportunity to rest.

Application:
How often do we panic when a storm arises in our own lives? We see the imminent threat, but Jesus sees something else. He was fully capable of calming the storm with just a word from his mouth. But sometimes he first needs to use the storm to grow our faith and help us to see beyond the chaos of the storm.

Prayer:
Lord, help me to see beyond the storms of life. I want fresh vision to see how you see. I put my faith in you wholly; help me to be able to rest in the storms that come, just like you Jesus. Amen.

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DAY 7

Scripture:
Honor the Lord with your possessions and with the first produce of your entire harvest; then your barns will be completely filled, and your vats will overflow with new wine. - Proverbs 3:9-10

Observation:
Blessing and provision come from the Lord. We acknowledge that and honor him when we tithe. It isn't about the money for God, but rather it's about our heart. Do we trust in ourselves and our own ability to make money, or do we trust in him as our provider?

Application:
God loves to be generous with us! When we hold onto our money, and hold back our tithe, it's in essence saying to the Lord that we don't trust him to provide. But when we approach God open-handedly, and in obedience give back to him, we acknowledge that what we have was always his anyways. If this is challenging for you, pray about it. He never fails, and he won't let you down.

Prayer:
Lord, thank you for always providing for me what I need. You are generous and trustworthy, and I want to see clearly your provision in my life. Help me to honor you with my money, and use it to do your will. Amen.

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END OF WEEK 01

Congratulations! You have made it through the first seven days of our 21 day journey. Over the past week, we have gotten to know God and His gift for us, how He is wanting to grow our faith, and how He wants to teach us to put our problems in His hands. I hope you are enjoying this daily time with Our Maker.

As we move into this next week, the prayer section of your daily devotion will be blank. This is intentional so don't worry. The reason we did this, is to turn your time with God into a daily habit.

Classical Greek philosopher Socrates, known as the founder of Western philosophy, once said, "The soul, like the body, accepts by practice whatever habit one wishes it to contact." In a less philosophical way, just as a gym membership can change our body - a daily conversation with God can change our souls.

This week, lean into this development. Jot down your prayer each day and just be you. Remember, this can be as simple as asking God to help you use this scripture, or even a prayer for greater insight on what He may be revealing to you. Prayer is a two-way conversation, so be sure to listen to what God has to say.

Your Friend,
Pastor James

DAY 8

Scripture:
Do not despise the Lord's instruction, my son, and do not loathe his discipline; for the Lord disciplines the one he loves, just as a father disciplines the son in whom he delights. - Proverbs 3:11-12

Observation:
God doesn't correct us just because he enjoys discipline. He is the best of parents, modeling for us what it is to correct out of love. His discipline is not reactive in nature, but always for our benefit.

Application:
If you are a parent, what do you take away from these verses to apply to your own relationship with your children? If you are not in a child-raising season of life, how have you seen his loving correction in your own life?

Prayer:

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Scripture:
Greet a household when you enter it, and if the household is worthy, let your peace be on it; but if it is unworthy, let your peace return to you.
- Matthew 10:12-13

Observation:
Jesus has just sent his disciples out to do ministry, and is giving them a spiritual directive to accompany a cultural practice of the day. They would have given a salutation upon entering a new home, and he's telling them to pray or bless the home with peace. If the host ends up being hostile, then at worst that prayer for peace would return back to the disciple.

Application:
People might not always be receptive to our peace, but are we doing our part to bring it with us everywhere we go? Practice praying for your neighbors, your workplace, the stores you visit, even your own home today.

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DAY 10

Scripture:
But I have trusted in your faithful love; my heart will rejoice in your deliverance. I will sing to the Lord because he has treated me generously. - Psalm 13:5-6

Observation:
The Lord is worthy of our trust. His love does not fail. He is always faithful to follow through, and generous with his children.

Application:
Spend some time today reflecting on God's faithfulness in your own life. Thank him for his generosity and his love. He cares for you, and loves when you praise him for it!

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Scripture:
"Come to me, all of you who are weary and burdened, and I will give you rest. Take up my yoke and learn from me, because I am lowly and humble in heart, and you will find rest for your souls. For my yoke is easy and my burden is light." - Matthew 11:28-30

Observation:
Everyone has burdens that Jesus wants to free us from. It could be someone who has been chasing pleasure, and finds that it always comes up a little short. Or someone who believes, but is wracked with guilt because they still struggle with so much temptation. Or maybe it's someone who's always pursuing success, but is tired of the climb. No matter what the burden is, Jesus wants to take it and give us peace and rest instead.

Application:
Jesus doesn't just give us peace and send us on our way. He wants to teach us a new way to live, to walk each day with us. But if we want his peace, we also must submit to his authority. Is there an area in your life that you've been keeping back from him?

Prayer:

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DAY 12

Scripture:
God said to him, "Your name is Jacob; you will no longer be named Jacob, but your name will be Israel." So he named him Israel. - Genesis 35:10

Observation:
Throughout the Bible we see God rename people. It usually signifies a promise he is making with them, or a new season they are about to walk into. These names are not hollow for God. Wrapped inside each name is an anointing, a mantle of responsibility that has been entrusted to them. God gives Jacob the name Israel as a reminder that he will fulfill his promise to grow Abraham's line into a great nation.

Application:
God calls you his child, beloved, chosen, and wanted. He has a specific calling for your life. What are some other things that you have personally felt God call you?

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Scripture:
I tell you, on the day of judgment people will give account for every careless word they speak, for by your words you will be justified, and by your words you will be condemned. - Matthew 12:36-37

Observation:
The words we speak are a reflection of what's going on in our hearts. What we let in has a huge impact on what comes out of our mouths. It's easy to take for granted the importance of our words, and go with whatever the culture around us says. Jesus challenges us to put our speech on a higher level.

Application:
These are some painfully challenging verses. Jesus takes our words seriously. We should, too. We are called to be the representatives of Jesus to the world. How can we do that if we don't deal with the junk in our hearts, and change what comes out of our mouths?

Prayer:

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DAY 14

Scripture:
Toward the scorners he is scornful, but to the humble he gives favor.
- Proverbs 3:34

Observation:
It doesn't please God to judge others, or to look on them with contempt. Someone who wants to honor God must understand their own lowness; not to be confused with low self-esteem, but a correct understanding of themselves in light of the greatness of God. It's hard to be scornful of others when you're busy practicing humility.

Application:
It's much easier to focus on the flaws of others than it is to address an issue inside of ourselves. Thankfully, we serve a gracious God who is gentle with us when we come to him with our failures. Is there something you've been avoiding that you need to open to the Lord today?

Prayer:

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I commend the commitment you've given to the past 14 days. As we move into the last week of 21 Days of Prayer, I believe we will deepen the habit of talking to our Heavenly Father. My hope, as your pastor, is that each day of this journey you would encounter new discoveries that will change the way you pray. When you change the way you pray, everything changes. No matter how dark and hopeless a situation might seem, don't stop praying, keep pressing in, your breakthrough is a prayer away and it will be worth it.

An American radio speaker and author, dealing mostly with the subjects of human character development, Earl Nightingale said, "Success is the progressive realization of a worthy goal." A deep relationship with God is the goal, and it is by far worth it. The plans of God are only revealed in the presence of God. So, keep praying.

This devotional guide challenged you last week as we left part of your devotional guide blank. Now, this week you will see two sections blank. Over the last two week's, God has been walking side by side with you, developing your habit. He will not leave you, but He does want to stretch you and grow you so that it may change you.

Your Friend,
James

DAY 15

Scripture:
...and the seven years of famine began to come, as Joseph had said. There was famine in all lands, but in all the land of Egypt there was bread.
- Genesis 41:54

Observation:
Joseph was a wise steward of Egypt's resources in a time of abundance, and it paid off in the time of famine. Later we see that he'd prepared so well that the rest of the Earth came to him for food when they started to starve. This is a perfect example of God's principle of stewardship: Managing wisely what God provides, to glorify God and to better the world and community around us.

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Prayer:
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Scripture:
And he did not do many mighty works there, because of their unbelief. - Matthew 13:58

Observation:
Jesus' ministry was hindered by the lack of faith and offense he encountered in his hometown. How often do we hinder the work he wants to do, because we don't believe he can?

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Prayer:
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DAY 17

Scripture:
And now do not be distressed or angry with yourselves because you sold me here, for God sent me before you to preserve life. - Genesis 45:5

Observation:
Joseph had the power to severely punish his brothers for what they did to him. Yet here we see him displaying forgiveness, and even comforting them. He did not let unforgiveness become a weight for his life. By letting go of bitterness he was able to see the good that God brought out of his pain.

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Prayer:
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Scripture:
Do not enter the path of the wicked, and do not walk in the way of the evil. Avoid it; do not go on it; turn away from it and pass on. - Proverbs 4:14-15

Observation:
Don't even start down the path towards sin. A few steps may seem innocent enough at first, but wisdom would say to run the opposite way.

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Prayer:
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DAY 19

Scripture:
This is what their father said to them as he blessed them, blessing each with the blessing suitable to him.
- Genesis 49:28

Observation:
There is such intentionality in how Jacob approaches this last interaction with his sons. There was a practical component to these familial blessings, as they laid out inheritance rights, but there was also a significant prophetic component as well. Jacob didn't dole out generic, vague blessings. He paid attention to his sons and to what the Lord was wanting to do in their lives, and blessed them specifically.

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Prayer:
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Scripture:
And Joseph commanded his servants the physicians to embalm his father. So the physicians embalmed Israel... And the Egyptians wept for him seventy days.
- Genesis 50:1-3

Observation:
This is a testament to the culture and community shifting power of someone who's willing to unreservedly say "yes" to God. The impact of Joseph's faithfulness to God so affected the Egyptians, that they even shared in his grief when his father passed away.

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Prayer:
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DAY 21

Scripture:
He replied, "...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." - Matthew 17:20

Observation:

Application:

Prayer:

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21 DAY'S OF PRAYER CAMPUS GATHERINGS

Northwest Campus: 1300 Jewetta Ave
When: Wednesday's, January 8, 15 & 22
Time: 7:00pm

Southwest Campus: 4201 Stine Road
When: Wednesday's, January 8, 15 & 22
Time: 7:00pm

Terrace Campus: 710 Terrace Way
When: Wednesday's, January 8, 15 & 22
Time: 6:30pm

newlife
CHURCH