

Why we pray and fast.

All through the scriptures the LORD call's for his people to humble themselves through prayer and fasting. Through out history, from the great awakening to the revivals once heard of in the church, every one of them were first proceeded by the people of God seeking the Lord through prayer and fasting.

Joel, a great prophet of God, was set apart by the Lord to call the people of Judah to repentance, through fasting, and prayer. His purpose was to call the Jews to return to the Lord. One way we do that is through fasting and prayer. The Lord says to the people, ""Yet even now," declares the Lord, "return to me with all your heart, with fasting, with weeping, and with mourning; and rend your hearts and not your garments." (Joel 2:12-13)

Prayer and fasting are powerful tools that the Lord has called us to participate in as we seek Him in our lives. Through fasting and prayer we are able to reorient our lives to God and once again put him as our priority.

I believe that if you and I pray and fast and seek the Lord we will see him move in our personal lives like never before. I also believe that when the church, when we come together as one body, will see the Lord move amongst his people, our church, and our community.

In 2 Chronicles 20 we find a story that illustrates for us the attitude we are to have when we fast and pray.

The people of Judah were in trouble. It looked as if it was going to be total devastation for God's anointed. Even Jehoshaphat, the warrior king, was afraid. He became so fearful that he turned all his attention toward seeking the Lord in his life as he began to pursue God more intently than he'd ever done before.

At the prospect of massive defeat, Jehoshaphat proclaimed a fast throughout all of Judah. He asked the people to stop eating until God prevailed in their situation. He understood the spiritual practices of fasting and prayer, and he knew that to fast before God was the obedient way to show his complete helplessness and humility before God.

In verse 12, he makes this powerful declaration: "Our God, will You not judge them? For we are powerless before this vast multitude that comes to fight against us. We do not know what to do, but we look to You."

Jehoshaphat realized something that you and I must realize as we begin this season of prayer and fasting. He learned that he must stop looking at the natural and instead focus on the supernatural. You and I, we are so blinded by only what we can see that we cannot imagine what God sees before us.

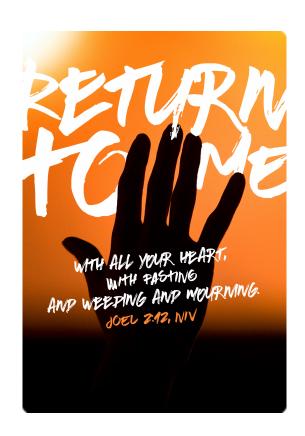
There are things that we cannot see God preparing and doing because we cannot look past our present situation.

It is time that we return to the Lord through prayers and petitions as we fast together for the glory of the Lord.

That is what I believe the Lord is leading us into right now, to fast and pray as we seek His vision for the future in our lives and in our church. When Jehoshaphat came to a point in his life that he could no longer rely on himself his desire was to look to God. I believe that is exactly what we need right now, to

look beyond ourselves and our past, to look beyond our previous hurts and seek the Kingdom of God together as ONE church.

Fasting and prayer are not gimmicks to get God to do what we want him to do, but instead they are tools to align ourselves with his will, his vision and purpose. That is exactly where I want to be as well.



How to fast.

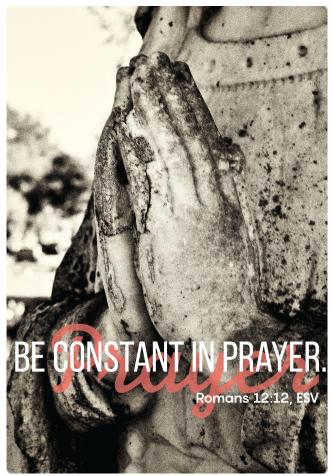
I would like to offer you some basic guidelines on how to fast.

- Seek the Lord as to how and what you are to fast from. Fasting doesn't necessarily mean from food, though it usually does. I would encourage you to ask the Lord this one question, "What is distracting me from you?" I think He will gladly show you what that is and if so, you should fast in that way.
- Once you know how you are to fast and from what, put stops and road blocks in your way to prevent you from failing. If you are fasting from social media, delete the app on your phone and computer, you can always reload it later. If its something to do with food; be sure you let your spouse or those in your household know, then clean out your pantries and resist the urge to go through the drive-thru.
- When you fast, be sure that you are replacing the time that you spent in that activity with scripture reading and prayer. This is not a vacation or a diet plan.
- Think about your safety. If you have never done a complete fast from food, I would not recommend starting without preparations. Begin with day long and then maybe three day fasts. Work your way up to a week. Be sure to eat healthy foods before starting a food fast. I would encourage you to make healthy choices during the fast as well, even if you are not participating in a food fast.
- When fasting do not feel bad for choosing to rest or sleep. Let this be a time of renewal. Remember, fighting the enemy

through prayer and fasting is not easy work. You are at WAR!

Types of fasting.

- Partial Fast or Juice and water fast: This is where you consume healthy plant and fruit juices rather than food. (Recommended)
- Normal Fast: This is where
 you only drink water. If you
 have not participated in
 long term fasting, you
 should not attempt to fast in this way, it can be dangerous if
 you are not well educated.
- Day long fasts: Choose a day each week and choose to fast for the entire day. I recommend sun down to sun down. That was a biblical day.
- Absolute Fast: This is where you do not drink or eat anything, usually no longer than three days and should not be done without medical supervision.
- Fast from social media, email, music, events, basically anything that prevents you from spending time with God.



How to pray.

Lastly, I would like to give you some guidance on how we are to pray along with some things that we need to be praying for during this time.



- Prepare yourself to pray by setting aside a quiet place without distraction. Do not try to pray with the tv on and the kids running through the house. That may mean that your time to pray is early in the morning.
- Begin with scripture. I specifically like the Psalms during my prayer time. They are songs and prayers written in ancient times. Sometimes you and I need help praying and the Psalms can help direct us in how we are to pray.
- There is no magical time that you must spend in prayer, but I
 would encourage you to spend as much time as you would
 spend on that in which you are fasting from.
- I would encourage you to pray the "Our Father" otherwise known as the Lord's Prayer. (I have included at the end of this booklet an appendix with prayers, scriptures, and creedal statements that I find helpful in my prayer life.)
- Prayer is an act of worship. Feel free to include music and a time to sing to the Lord during your prayer time. Just be sure that you are also still and quiet at some point.
- While you are praying remember that for a healthy conversation to exist we must stop talking and listen. A good

rule is to listen twice as much as you talk. Meditate on God's Word.

I encourage you to keep a journal during your prayer times.
 Write down what you are praying for and the answer to it if you receive it. Write down the victories in your life and the things that God is pressing on your heart. This is meant to be a time of truly entreating the Lord in the needs and desires of our lives and the reorientation of those things to his will.

What to pray for, together.

I would like to give you some things that the Lord has laid upon my heart as your pastor to pray for together as a church. This list is not exhaustive and you must heed the direction of the Holy Spirit as to how you are to pray for yourselves and the situations that you find yourselves in during the coming year and season of life, but here are a few things.

- Pray for vision and direction God has for FBC Salisbury. Ask
 the Lord to show us not only this year but 5, 10, and 20 years
 from now. Where is FBC Salisbury at in a world that is growing
 colder and colder towards the gospel?
- Pray that the Lord would awaken in us the love of the gospel.
- Pray for spiritual awakening in our church and community.

- Pray for the current budget and how God would have us to use the money that he has blessed us with to glorify Him and reach the lost he has called us to.
- Pray for the spreading of the gospel amongst those in Chariton county.
- Pray that God would show us how we are to reach our neighbors and our community.

Appendix

Lord's Prayer

"Our Father in heaven,

hallowed be your name.

10 Your kingdom come, your will be done,

on earth as it is in heaven.

11 Give us this day our daily bread, 12 and forgive us our debts, as we also have forgiven our debtors.

13 And lead us not into temptation, but deliver us from evil. (Matt 6:9-13)

Apostle's Creed

I believe in God, the Father almighty,

creator of heaven and earth.

I believe in Jesus Christ, his only Son, our Lord,

who was conceived by the Holy Spirit

and born of the virgin Mary.

He suffered under Pontius Pilate,

was crucified, died, and was buried;

he descended to hell.

The third day he rose again from the dead.

He ascended to heaven

and is seated at the right hand of God the Father almighty.

From there he will come to judge the living and the dead.

I believe in the Holy Spirit,

the holy Church,

the communion of saints,

the forgiveness of sins,

the resurrection of the body,

and the life everlasting. Amen.

Nicene Creed

We believe in one God, the Father almighty, maker of heaven and earth, of all things visible and invisible. And in one Lord Jesus Christ, the only Son of God, begotten from the Father before all ages, God from God. Light from Light, true God from true God. begotten, not made; of the same essence as the Father. Through him all things were made. For us and for our salvation he came down from heaven; he became incarnate by the Holy Spirit and the virgin Mary, and was made human. He was crucified for us under Pontius Pilate; he suffered and was buried. The third day he rose again, according to the Scriptures. He ascended to heaven and is seated at the right hand of the Father. He will come again with glory to judge the living and the dead. His kingdom will never end. And we believe in the Holy Spirit, the Lord, the giver of life. He proceeds from the Father and the Son, and with the Father and the Son is worshiped and glorified. He spoke through the prophets. We believe in one holy and apostolic church. We affirm one baptism for the forgiveness of sins. We look forward to the resurrection of the dead, and to life in the world to come. Amen.

Scriptures

Joel 1:13-20

Isaiah 58:3-7

Acts 13:2-4

Exodus 34:28-29

2 Samuel 1:16-22

Joel 2:12-13

Nehemiah

Daniel 9:3-5

Luke 4

Jonah 3:5-9

Notes

