

20 - 27th February
2022

Renew

Prayer & fasting is a way of life

A week of prayer & fasting

Dear Riversiders

Our week of Prayer and Fasting has always been a week where we come together to declare our need for God, for his grace, his work, his power, and his kingdom. Every year we see how God moves in incredible ways and we are so grateful for how our loving Father pours out such abundant grace in these times.

As we engage the week of prayer and fasting this year, we want to take a slightly different approach. Listen to these two verses from Psalm 51:

*Create in me a pure heart, O God,
and RENEW a STEADFAST spirit within me. (vs 10)
RESTORE to me the joy of your salvation
and grant me a WILLING spirit, to SUSTAIN me.” (vs 12)*

First of all, notice how David is asking God for a WILLING spirit. Are you willing – or are you at least willing to be willing? Secondly, David isn't looking for a once-off spiritual high (as exciting as those moments can be). He wants a STEADFAST faith, a faith that can SUSTAIN him through good times and through bad times. To this end, David is asking God to RESTORE him and RENEW him so that God can move him towards higher and more sustained levels of faith and power.

Taking our cue from these verses, we have noticed that many of us have this short intense week of prayer and fasting, but how many of us can say that we live with a steadfast and a sustained faith throughout the rest of the year? So, this year, while we want to have a focused week of prayer and fasting, our greater goal is that it would be a week that RESTORES and RENEWS our faith in a way that catalyzes a *steadfast* and *sustained* faith throughout the rest of the year.

FASTING

Fasting powerfully reminds our entire mind, body and spirit of how dependent we are on God's supply. The physical discomfort also helps

us to grieve our sin and identify with the groans and pains of our broken world.

We want to therefore suggest that you choose to fast this week in a way that can be sustained beyond the week. Skip a meal (or two or three). Let the aching be a tangible reminder to pray, to confess and to intercede. But don't stop there. Sustain this practice by doing it once a week, once every two weeks or even once a month. Commit to being renewed by the Lord by making fasting part of your steadfast faith.

PRAYER

During the course of this week, we will be guiding you through some simple habits and ways of praying. If praying regularly is a stretch for you, set a timer on your phone and do 1 or 2 minutes per prayer point. Doing one minute per prayer point is way better than skipping it completely.

Once you've been through the prayer week, you will have been taught some habits of prayer that you can now incorporate into a sustained lifestyle of prayer. Plus, as you flex your 'prayer muscles', you can grow in intensity and time, just like any other healthy habit.

So please commit to participating with us together in praying and fasting in these various ways this week. But more than that, let God RENEW and RESTORE a *willing, steadfast* spirit that can *sustain* a powerful faith in 2022!

Stephen Pohlmann

MONDAY

CRAIG – USING PRAYER CARDS

I have found using prayer cards to be a very helpful habit in my prayer life because they keep my thoughts ordered and focused; I feel like I have accomplished something during my prayer time; and I can use them to pray throughout the day or in my morning prayer time.

Making Prayer Cards

- Either cut some cardboard or paper into cards, or if you are able to you can buy some cue cards.
- On each card write one area of your life or society. For example:
 - ❖ My Children
 - ❖ My Wife
 - ❖ Local government
 - ❖ Church leadership
- Under each heading write one or more things that you are trusting God for in relation to that item. For example:
 - ❖ My children - I am trusting God for their health
 - ❖ My Wife – I am trusting God for her safety; restoration of joy in all she does
 - ❖ Local government – I am trusting God for bold, Godly leadership; wisdom in all their decision making
- I keep these cards on my desk and then multiple times a day, or systematically in the morning I take a card and I pray for what is on it.
- It also becomes an evolving process because I add things to the cards as they arise.

TUESDAY

BIANCA – POUR OUT, POUR IN, POUR FORTH

Firstly, present yourself intentionally to God. Present yourself as a living sacrifice.

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

Romans 12:1-2

Pour out: an act of emptying out ourselves

- **Confession** - which brings freedom not condemnation. *There is nothing that sin can give you that is worth what it will take from you.* - Beth Moore.
Our tendencies to sin are a sign that we are lacking in our belief that we are his beloved children. Our moods lead our choices to sin. The more we are living in the Spirit, the more we'll choose actions that are loving to God and others. Pour out your list to Him... receive forgiveness.
- **Concern** - *Trust in him at all times, you people; pour out your hearts to him, for God is our refuge.* Psalm 62:8 NIV
This will help us not tell God how we want or think he should fix our problem. What are you anxious about... tell him about it without telling him what you want Him to do about it.

Pour in

We are in a constant state of wanting more... more money, more time, more happiness (you fill in the blanks). Tell him where you feel empty. Ask for more of his Holy Spirit, his peace, his wisdom, his love, his healing power. *I pray that out of his glorious riches he may strengthen you with power through his Spirit in your inner being, so that Christ may dwell in your hearts through faith. And I pray that you, being rooted and established in*

love, may have power, together with all the Lord's holy people, to grasp how wide and long and high and deep is the love of Christ, and to know this love that surpasses knowledge—that you may be filled to the measure of all the fullness of God. Ephesians 3:16-19 NIV

Pour forth

We are healed and filled...so that... Ask him to give you a heart and the eyes to see the needs of those around you. Physical, emotional, social, love. And then the courage to meet those needs.

WEDNESDAY **CHRISTIE – LISTENING PRAYER**

How to listen to the Lord

- ❖ Quiet yourself. Breathe deeply.
- ❖ Invite the Holy Spirit to speak to you and reveal God's heart.
- ❖ Ask God to speak. If you have a specific question, bring it to Him.
- ❖ Practice listening and see what comes to mind (e.g. a scripture, an idea, a picture, a person, a song, an insight, an emotion, a prompting).
- ❖ Write it down.
- ❖ Process through what God is saying and respond. This may require further prayer and listening to gain more clarity, following through on a direction He has given, or reflecting on what He has said and how that influences or changes your perspective.
- ❖ Share what you have received with someone you trust.

How to test if what you received is from God

- ❖ It aligns with scripture
- ❖ It leads to Fruit of the Spirit
- ❖ It is never condemning, shaming or accusing
- ❖ Even with risk, it gives peace
- ❖ Ask spiritually mature friends for their input

THURSDAY **STEVE – THE LORD'S PRAYER**

When the disciples asked Jesus to teach them how to pray, the Lord's Prayer is how Jesus answered them. This prayer is not meant to be an INCANTATION, something we mindlessly quote, but rather a SPRINGBOARD that moves our hearts and minds towards God's heart and God's kingdom. At least you don't need to memorize it as most of you know it already!

Our Father in heaven: Start off recognizing God as your perfect, loving Father, who only desires good things for you. He wants to love you, affirm you, forgive you, receive you and equip you. Before you've done a single good or bad thing, your starting point is a child who is deeply loved by God.

Hallowed be Your name: God is loving, but He is also majestic, holy, transcendent, King of kings and Almighty God. Honour his name and worship him. Think of his glorious attributes; call to mind the many reasons you have to worship and honour him.

Your kingdom come: This line is all about submitting to the kingdom rule of Jesus Christ as Lord. Jesus is active in this world and desires that you are a willing participant in his kingdom. Consider some of the ways God has been challenging you. Alternatively consider all the broken places in this world and in our lives that are calling out for God's kingly rule.

Your will be done ... in heaven: This is naturally flowing out of the previous point. Before we ask God for what *we* want and need, we submit ourselves to *His* will and *His* ways. Consider some of the Scriptures you have read or heard where God's will is clear. Submit in prayer to God's will in all things.

FRIDAY

SIZWE – PRAYING SCRIPTURE

Give us today our daily bread: Bring your needs before him. Pray for God's supply of strength, His wisdom, His Spirit, His perspective, His supply in all things.

Forgive us our debts, as we also have been forgiven: This is where we choose to forgive others out of the forgiveness we have received from God. Confess your sin, your brokenness, your doubts and your inadequacies to him. Be bold in the details! But then know that we have not sinned against the law but against love. In prayer, recognize Jesus as the one who has died for your sin and receive grace and forgiveness from your heavenly Father. Now ask God to reveal any unforgiveness towards others and actively choose to forgive them with the riches of grace you have received.

Lead us not into temptation, but deliver us from the evil one: Consider your weaknesses and the day ahead. Are there any decisions God is calling you to make that will lead you to trust his ways and his strength rather than your own? Choose to live being led by His Spirit rather than by your own fleshly desires.

Yours is the kingdom ... Amen: We exist for God's glory and for God's kingdom, not our own. The irony is we find our meaning and purpose most when we live for him. Commit *this* day to the Lord, His kingdom and His glory.

Starting with the "why"

- Scripture should be our springboard in prayer.
- Scripture helps align us to God's heart and will.
- Scripture gives the tools and language to fight spiritually and to find safety in Jesus.

Following with the "How"

- ❖ The aim is not just to quote scripture but rather to expand on it in our own words.
- ❖ Find a scripture that is relevant/meaningful to you or your current situation.
- ❖ Ensure that it is read and understood in context. (Tip: Read a few verses before and after your chosen passage).
- ❖ Asking a question, such as "what do we learn about God in this passage," will be a good springboard leading to praise and worship in your prayers
- ❖ Simply reflect, in your own words, God's words back to him. Reflect who he is in worship, what he is calling you to do and to be.
- ❖ Connect as many dots as possible in prayer, connecting the Scripture to your life, the lives of people around you and the world.
- ❖ Ask him for his strength to live out this Scripture.

SATURDAY

VERNON – MEMORISE & MEDITATE

Why we need silence and solitude:

- Jesus modelled this for us. Mark 1:35. Do what Jesus did.
- Finding a place where you are alone with God away from all distractions helps you focus on him.

How to start:

- ❖ Intentionally quiet your mind so you can know his presence and hear his voice.
- ❖ Invite the Holy Spirit to prepare your heart for what he wants to say.
- ❖ Start by doing this for two minutes.

Meditating & Memorising

- ❖ Have a scripture ready that you can read slowly. As you read it be aware of what God is highlighting to you.
- ❖ Questions to ask:
 - What is God revealing about himself in the passage?
 - What is God saying to me/How do I identify with what I'm reading?
 - What is God asking me to do?
- ❖ Memorize the portion of scripture (or one verse a day) so you can engage it over the next month. Go over it every day until it becomes second nature to you.

Possible scriptures to start with

Therefore, as God's chosen people, holy and dearly loved, clothe yourselves with compassion, kindness, humility, gentleness and patience. Bear with each other and forgive one another if any of you has a grievance against someone. Forgive as the Lord forgave you. And over all these virtues put on love, which binds them altogether in perfect unity. Let the peace of Christ rule in your hearts, since as members of one body you were called to peace. And be thankful. Let the message of Christ dwell among you richly as you teach and admonish one another with all wisdom through psalms, hymns and songs from the Spirit, singing to God with gratitude in your hearts. And whatever you do whether in word or deed, do it all in the name of the Lord Jesus, giving thanks to God the Father through Him. Col 3:12-17

Rejoice always. Pray continually. Give thanks in all circumstances for this is God's will for you in Christ Jesus. 1 Thess 5:16-18

Be kind and compassionate to one another, forgiving each other, just as in Christ God forgave you. Follow God's example, therefore, as dearly loved children and walk in the way of love, just as Christ loved us and gave Himself up for us as a fragrant offering and sacrifice to God. Eph 4:32-5:2

Rejoice in the Lord always. I will say it again: Rejoice! Let your gentleness be evident to all. The Lord is near. Do not be anxious about anything, but in everything, by prayer and petition, with thanksgiving, present your requests to God. And the peace of God which transcends all understanding will guard your hearts and your minds in Christ Jesus. Finally, brothers and sisters, whatever is true, whatever is noble, whatever is right, whatever is pure, whatever is lovely, whatever is admirable – if anything is excellent or praiseworthy – think about such things. Whatever you have learned or received or heard from me – put it into practice. And the God of peace will be with you. Phil 4:4-9