

21 DAYS OF PRAYER AND FASTING

A Lenten devotional guide for young people



What is Lent?

The season of Lent begins with the observance of Ash Wednesday, and ends on the day before Easter Sunday.

This 40 day season (the Sundays are not counted in the 40) is a time to reflect on our journey of faith, to examine our relationships, and to become a part of the story of Jesus' journey to Jerusalem and the cross.

By observing this season, we invite young people to step out of regular time (school...jobs...dating...) and into God's time for a while.

Like Advent, Lent is a contemplative season and a time of preparation for Easter. Lent is often regarded as a time when we examine our lives and repent or gain a new perspective or path forward.

Christians often take up special spiritual practices during Lent such as fasting and observing extra times of study and prayer. The popular practice of 'giving up something' for Lent really has nothing to do with exercising one's self-control. Rather, it is a way to make space in our regular routines to allow God to do something new in our lives.



21 DAYS OF PRAYER AND FASTING

Like prayer and Bible reading, fasting is one of the spiritual disciplines of followers of Jesus. Below is a guide to help you understand fasting and help you get started in this powerful habit!

What is fasting?

Biblical fasting is, very simply, denying yourself food for the sake of seeking and honouring God. Prayer is connecting with God, fasting is disconnecting ourselves from the world. You can fast from things like food, TV, movies, games, social networking and more.

Why should I fast?

Over time, we sometimes get 'lost' in the things of the world. Fasting is a way to give our bodies and souls a deep cleanse. When we do, we can draw closer to God, and can become more in tune with his voice.

How do I fast?

There are several different types of fasts. This plan is just a guide. You can mix it up or create your own. The main thing to remember is not to make it all about what you eat and don't eat. This is all about drawing closer to God and replacing the distractions to pray, read our Bibles and seek God like never before. On days when giving up Facebook etc. do it for the whole day. If you're giving up food, do what challenges you spiritually. To prepare, it's best to slow down on your eating before the fast, then pick it up slowly by eating small portions of simple foods. It's smart to plan ahead and make sure you have plenty of healthy foods ready for when you start eating again.

HELPFUL TIPS



DRINK LOTS OF
WATER

CARVE OUT
**QUIET
TIME**
EACH DAY.

Sometimes, it's best to do this in the morning because once your day begins there will be tons of distractions.



LISTEN TO
**WORSHIP
MUSIC**

PRAY 

GRAB YOUR
BIBLE,
THIS HANDOUT
AND MAYBE A
JOURNAL TO
CAPTURE YOUR
THOUGHTS AND
WHAT GOD
SHOWS YOU.



READ
YOUR BIBLE

**Get ready,
this could be
an experience
like no other!**

YOU COULD
TRY USING THE
**SOAP
METHOD**

SCRIPTURE

Read the scripture passage from your Bible and the notes from this guide.

OBSERVE

Think about what you see that clicks with you. What do you think it means? Can you relate to it in your life?

APPLICATION

How do you think this Scripture applies to you personally? What is God trying to say to you through his word?

PRAYER

Pray and ask Jesus to make those applications real. Is there something that needs to change? Is there someone you need to talk to or apologise to? Is God asking you to do something you have never done before? Listen to hear his voice....



DAY 1 INTERNET

READ: 1 SAMUEL 10

God doesn't always pick people who are fully qualified to do the job he's calling them to do. He qualifies, guides and leads the ones he chooses. There's a big difference! When we shift our focus to God's ability instead of our inability, we will find we can step out in faith and confidence to do what he is calling us to do.

Think about what God is calling you to do. Does fear prevent you from stepping out in faith and courage?

Talk to God about these things over the next 21 days and ask him to help you reach a deeper level of trust in him.

DAY 2 TELEVISION

READ: MARK 4

Seeds need the right conditions to grow and bear fruit. Jesus uses this parable to explain that his word is like seed. It is sown into our hearts with the potential to bear lots of fruit. Sometimes, it's the condition of our hearts that can hinder us from allowing his Word to work deeply within us.

Consider the condition of your heart. Which 'soil' best describes it? Despite what you may discover, God can change it all and turn your heart into fertile ground that produces life.

Turn off the TV and make time to pray to God. Ask him to show you what kind of soil your heart is. Ask him to help you make it fertile.



DAY 3 LUNCH

READ: 1 Samuel 11

Do you ever have times when you get some bad news and end up feeling so sad it makes you want to give up? Or times when you feel under so much pressure, fear or temptation that you just want to give in?

That's how the people of Israel felt in this chapter. But when everyone else was afraid, God rushed in and helped King Saul lead the people to fight and to DEFEAT their enemies! Next time you feel overwhelmed by weakness or just plain discouraged, remember that fasting is one of the ways to allow the Holy Spirit to flow in our lives. He gives us the power, strength and energy to overcome any difficulties we may face. Try going without lunch today and spend time with God instead.



DAY 4 FACEBOOK

READ: 1 SAMUEL 12

The people of Israel had it made. God Himself was their king! He guided and protected them, providing everything they needed. But other nations had a man for a king - and the Israelites thought that would be a good idea too. They worried about what others thought of them, and wanted to be like everyone around them. They ended up being ruled by an imperfect man instead of a perfect God.

Sometimes we can do the same thing. With Facebook, we sometimes worry too much about what others are doing, thinking or saying.

Disconnect from it today and let God remind you who you are in him - his precious child. Recommit and make God your King!

DAY 5 LOLLIES

READ: MARK 5

Have you ever felt like things seemed impossible?

In those moments, when you realise there is nothing YOU can do - let God take over! In Mark 5, a heartbroken dad finds out his daughter has died. What could he do? Jesus knew. "Do not fear...only believe". God is a problem solver - he's been doing it for a long time! You can always trust Jesus, no matter what you are facing.

What difficult situation do you need to let go of? Is there anything in life that you've given up on or lost hope for? Is there anything that you need to let Jesus breathe life back into? Recommit those things to him today.



DAY 6 INTERNET & TV

READ: 1 SAMUEL 13

Saul was 30 when he became king of Israel and he reigned for 42 years. The entire time Saul struggled with obedience to God. He made choices to please people instead of looking to please God (and he suffered the consequences). Today's reading is about Saul disobeying God yet again, taking matters into his own hands instead of waiting for God's timing. This time, his disobedience cost him his crown. Have you ever got tired of waiting? Have you taken matters into your own hands only to later regret it? Severe consequences can be avoided altogether if we can learn to trust God and wait on him. Today, pray that God will strengthen your perseverance, even through temptation.

DAY 7 TV & INSTAGRAM

READ: 1 SAMUEL 14

Jonathan takes a big risk in this chapter - because he trusted in God. No doubt we all have times when we shrink back in fear or intimidation. Even if you feel outnumbered, remember God is with you. Put your confidence in his character and his ability - and watch him do the impossible. Today, spend some of your time thinking about the amazing greatness of God! Jesus died so that we can have victory in our lives. Even if you're not facing challenges right now, strengthen your faith in who He is. As you read through this passage, notice the character and strength of God. Remember who he is and that very same God that worked on Jonathan's behalf is also there for YOU!

DAY 8 LOLLIES & JUNK FOOD

READ: MARK 6

In our culture, it seems that being cynical has somehow become cool. In Mark chapter 6, we read how Jesus was unable to do any mighty works in his hometown of Nazareth because the people's cynical thinking turned into scepticism.

Their narrow thinking actually blocked the power of Jesus! A wall had been built up in their minds and no matter what miraculous things Jesus did, all they could see was the kid next door, the carpenter's son.

Have you become cynical? Does it seem foolish to believe for the impossible, even though there's something in you that believes there could be more?

Pray about those areas specifically and ask God to increase your faith. Remember, even if your faith is the size of a mustard seed, God can work with that.



DAY 9 MEAT & LOLLIES

READ: 1 SAMUEL 15

After being confronted in this chapter, Saul finally confessed that he was wrong. But something was missing: he never repented and turned back to God. All the way to the end, Saul still only cared about what other people thought. What pride and arrogance! Compromise after compromise led him to a road of complete destruction. No matter where we are, if we turn around and run back to God, he forgives us, restores us and puts us back on the right path. Are you holding onto something that God told you to get rid of? Have you compromised your walk with God? In your prayer time today, don't just confess, but repent! Turn away from those things and back to God. You will be refreshed and set free when you do!



DAY 10 TV & INTERNET

READ: 1 SAMUEL 16

David knew the sting of rejection because he didn't look the part, but he held firm to who he was in God. Even though his own father was ready to overlook him, David knew his destiny was not in the hands of man. He had a heart after God. God set the record straight and made it clear that He doesn't judge the outward appearance - he looks at the heart.

Today people are judged or dismissed because of the way they look. True character is really shown through a person's actions, not their appearance. Take some time to think about how you relate to others and how you see yourself. Commit to following after God and finding your value in him.

DAY 11 JUNK FOOD & LOLLIES

READ: PSALM 56 & 57

Do you ever turn to food when you're in a bad mood or having a bad day? Maybe for you it isn't food or lollies, but other things you turn to when you're worried, frustrated or afraid. When King David was having some of his most challenging days, he always turned to God. Like him, everyone struggles from time to time. During this time of concentrated prayer, fasting and personal devotion, ask God to take you to a new level of trust and satisfaction in him. Even though our nature is to turn to 'stuff', practise turning to God whenever you're tempted or having your roughest of days. The more we remember to put God first, the stronger we will become.



DAY 12 INSTAGRAM & TV

READ: 1 SAMUEL 17

You know that feeling when you hear someone talking badly about your best friend? It can make you angry pretty quick can't it? In the same way, when David heard the way Goliath was speaking to the Israelite army, he was furious! Even when his brother questioned him. David didn't back down. He knew this was a big deal - he was standing up for the name of God. Standing for God can often mean being criticised. We can learn a lot from David; he didn't debate with his brother and he kept his focus on the real issues. Today, take some time to think about what really matters in your life. What is God calling you to? If others are trying to tear you down, keep focus on God to avoid getting sidetracked.



DAY 13 MEAT

READ: 1 SAMUEL 18

David's life was full of trials. God was with him and blessed him big-time, but David had to practice patience, kindness, honour, humility and self-control along the way. It's the same for us today. God is with us, but we live in a fallen and broken world and things aren't always easy. No matter what, we have to check our attitudes and actions - regardless of what we are facing. Practicing this daily is what will build a Christ-like character within us.

How often do you show patience to others? Do you show kindness to your siblings and honour your parents? Today, observe your attitude and work on making it more Christ-like.

DAY 14 TELEVISION

READ: MARK 7

What does it mean to live a holy life? Is it following a set of rules to seem 'good' or is it something more? When we get caught up in just following rules, we miss out on growing in God.

We can follow rules and rituals all day long but if our lives are not being transformed on the inside, it all becomes meaningless. In your prayer time today, take some time to check things are not becoming a 'ritual' in your walk with God. If they are, don't worry - that can change.

Make a commitment to not just go through the motions, but really be present during this time and let God transform you in the process.



DAY 15 JUNK FOOD

READ: 1 SAMUEL 19

David was treated unfairly most of the time due to jealousy. He never responded in vengeance, or became bitter from it. Even though it meant he had to run for his life at times, David stayed faithful to God.

Have you ever been treated unfairly? Are there situations you face on a regular basis that seem unfair or unjust? Even if you are justified in your actions, resolve today that you're not going to react in a negative way.

Ask God to give you the patience and strength to respond in a way that is more Christ-like.

DAY 16

INTERNET

READ: 1 SAMUEL 20

True friendships can be a powerful thing. When we are surrounded by friends who truly love Jesus, they will encourage us, watch out for us and point us to God's best plan for us. We will come up against some tough times when we need good friends to support us. But we have to be careful to choose our closest friends, the ones we truly 'do life' with. Think about the friends closest to you. Are they spiritually strong people? If not, whom could you position yourself closer to? Think about what kind of friend you are to others. Resolve to be the kind of friend that encourages and challenges others to chase after God.

DAY 17

LOLLIES

READ: MARK 8

Even though the disciples had seen Jesus work miracles before, they didn't believe he could do them again. It was as though they simply forgot! But Jesus' work was never really about the miracle - it was about surrendering every care to him and trusting his ability. This is the key to keeping our faith alive. So how do we keep from responding the way the disciples did? No matter what your situation, surrender every care to God. His amazing miracle-working power is still alive today. If we will just release our burden to him, he will supply above and beyond what we need. What are you holding onto that you can surrender to God today? In your prayer time, release every care you have to the Lord, and believe he will take care of it.



DAY 18

BREAD

READ: 1 SAMUEL 21

David and his men had been on a long journey and were no doubt super hungry and needed food fast! They were so desperate that they resorted to eating the holy bread in the temple that was only for priests. This is a great picture of God's mercy and grace because God met their need by giving them access to a special kind of bread.

Though you may be really hungry right now like David and his men were, remember that we also have favour in God's eyes and Jesus has given us access to a better bread (Matt 4:4). God's Word is like food for our souls. If you can, spend some extra time filling up on God's word today.



DAY 19

INTERNET & PHONE APPS

READ: 1 SAMUEL 22

Even as David was running for his life, he took time to help Abiathar. He didn't get so caught up in his own problems that he didn't care about anything else. Sometimes in our own struggles we just can't find the strength to help others. It's in those hard times that we CAN find strength we never knew we had.

Are you going through something that God could use to help someone else? Have you been hurting on your own when you could be reaching out to someone for help? Remember, God didn't intend for us to 'do life' alone. Ask Him to show you ways you could be linking arms with others.

DAY 20

FACEBOOK

READ: MARK 9

Why did Jesus only take three of the disciples up to the mountain? Maybe it's because we give more access to those we are the most connected to.

Being close to God doesn't have to happen just during this guide. Keep it going for the next 21 days by making prayer, fasting and a devotion a regular part of your life.

Get alone with God. Disconnect every now and then from Facebook, texting and other distractions and you will find that being close to God is something you experience every day.



DAY 21

INTERNET

READ: 1 SAMUEL 23

David was faced with tough decisions that would impact himself, his soldiers and the nation of Israel. Instead of relying on his own strength and intelligence, David repeatedly gave God his undivided attention and asked Him what he should do. Because he obeyed, God gave them all the victory! You too will be faced with difficult decisions this year. Will this be a year of victory or defeat for you? Seek Jesus and love him with all your heart, mind, body and soul. Obeying his voice will make all the difference.



FINISH STRONG:

THE NEXT 21 DAYS

Whether you are tired, hungry or excited to be finishing, hang in there! Though the fast may be ending, it is really the beginning of a great year walking with God. Remember, the whole point of this devotional guide was to sacrifice food and other luxuries for the sake of giving God our undivided attention and growing deeper in him.

The fire and zeal for God burning in your heart is what keeps your relationship with him fresh and new. It allows you to continue serving and obeying him from a position of 'want to' and gives you an opportunity to experience his joy every day - regardless of what life brings your way.

Keep going for the next 21 days....and the next 21 days after that...keep going and going.

You've shown that you can make prayer, fasting and personal devotion time a part of your everyday life. During this time you've created space for God to fill. The best way to keep it going is to keep that space free indefinitely. Don't allow it to close up! Protect that time as something valuable and make it a priority to spend time with God every day.

Just like reading your Bible, praying and attending church, fasting is also a lifestyle.

We encourage you to make fasting a part of your life. It is a way to spend time with God.

Figure out what works for you, commit to it and make it a part of your life - you won't regret it!

GROWING IN FAITH TOGETHER



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