

The Park Church
Fresh Start 2023: 7-Day Churchwide Fast



Monday, January 2 - Sunday, January 8

For many of us, the new year is a time to refocus after what is usually a hectic holiday season. It's also the time when we confidently proclaim our resolutions, expectations, and plans for the year ahead. While we may have our plans, it is the Lord who will establish our steps. What better way to start the new year than by praying and fasting for God's will to be done in our lives? Pray, fast, surrender, and prepare to receive what God has in store for you. It's time for Fresh Start 2023!

During the Fresh Start 7-Day Fast, we encourage you to follow this daily fasting guide which includes the fast type for the day, Bible reading and reflective journal prompts. There is also corporate prayer in the morning. Prayer is a key practice in our relationship with God because this is the way that we communicate with Him. We pray using words and silence; listening and waiting on the Holy Spirit to direct us is a major component of prayer. A humble heart and a mind open to Jesus is what He expects, and the Holy Spirit will do the rest (Romans 8:26-27).

Why Should We Pray?

- We pray because we love God.
- We pray to worship God for who He is.
- We pray to say thanks to our Father.
- We pray to God to praise Him.
- We pray to petition God.
- We pray to confess our sins.
- We pray to intercede for others.
- We pray against the enemies of God.
- We pray to listen to God.
- We pray to resist temptation.
- We pray because He directs us to pray.

The Model Prayer

"Our Father Who art in heaven, hallowed be Your name"

—The prayer principles of adoration (praise for who God is) and thanksgiving (praise for what He has done).

"Your kingdom come; Your will be done on earth as it is in heaven"

—The principle of affirmation, that is, agreeing with God's will and submitting to it.

"Give us this day our daily bread"

—The principle of supplication, in which we make requests both for ourselves (petition) and for others (intercession).

"And forgive us our debts as we also have forgiven our debtors" — The principle of confession in view of our need for forgiveness of sins.

"And lead us not into temptation, but deliver us from the evil one"

—The necessity of renewal as we face the temptations of the world, the flesh, and the devil.

"For Yours is the kingdom and the power and the glory forever" —A closing prayer that honors the Lord and completes our thoughts.

As you petition God in prayer for your concerns, also pray daily for:

- Sensitivity to the work and guidance of the Holy Spirit
- Bishop Alexander and his family
- Wisdom for the Kingdom Team
- The Park Church/Congregation

What is a Fast?

A fast is a period of abstaining from something; denying self from a desire. There are multiple types of fasts, which we will cover in the Types of Fasts section below.

Why Should I Fast?

When you combine fasting and prayer, it can bring about a transformational revival – in you, the nation, and the world. It can be a very powerful tool in seeking God. The ultimate purpose of the fast is not you and what you seek, but God. Fasting is a true way to sacrifice for God and humble oneself to Him (Psalm 35:13; Ezra 8:21). Fasting is an act of worship and honoring.

How Should We Prepare for a Fast?

Spiritual Preparation

- Pray before you fast. Ensure that you communicate with God and seek His guidance regarding your fast.
- Ask God to help you to examine your heart, detect and repent any unconfessed sins.

Physical Preparation

- **Consult a doctor before fasting to ensure that all of your vitals are stable.**
- If you have severe medical maladies, you should definitely have professional supervision while fasting.
- Decrease the amount of food that you eat a couple of days prior to the fast starting in order to prepare your mind, stomach, and appetite for less food.

The best way to choose the appropriate fast is to follow the lead of the Holy Spirit. Pray purposefully in identifying God's purpose and direction in your fast. His direction is the only thing that will make the fast meaningful and significant.

Types of Fasts

Partial Fast – Abstain from food for a set time; eat a simple meal of bread & water; sacrifice a certain food.

Daniel Fast – Abstain from delicacies, meats, and wines and focus on fresh foods such as fruits and vegetables.

No Food Fast – Abstain from all food, including milk (protein) and only drink liquids and water.

Water only Fast – Abstain from everything except water.

Absolute/Supernatural Fast – This fast involves abstaining from all food or liquids, including water (the 40-day fast of Moses and Jesus, and the 3-day fast seen in Esther 4:16).

Technology Fast – Unplug from social media and refrain from watching television.

During the fast, it is important to focus on God, rather than food. The spiritual focus and growth will replace the normal presence of food during the fast. It is our prayer that the Lord's most wonderful love and blessings will be poured out on you as you take this exciting step of faith.

Foods to Include in Your Diet During The Daniel Fast

One of the great things about the Daniel Fast is that you are not limited to any specific amount of food, but rather to the kinds of food you can eat. The Daniel Fast is limited to vegetables (includes fruits) and water.

All fruits. These can be fresh, frozen, dried, juiced or canned. Fruits include but are not limited to apples, apricots, bananas, blackberries, blueberries, boysenberries, cantaloupe, cherries, cranberries, figs, grapefruit, grapes, guava, honeydew melon, kiwi, lemons, limes, mangoes, nectarines, oranges, papayas, peaches, pears, pineapples, plums, prunes, raisins, raspberries, strawberries, tangelos, tangerines, watermelon.

All vegetables. These can be fresh, frozen, dried, juiced or canned. Vegetables include but are not limited to artichokes, asparagus, beets, broccoli, Brussels sprouts, cabbage, carrots, cauliflower, celery, chili peppers, collard greens, corn, cucumbers, eggplant, garlic, ginger root, kale, leeks, lettuce, mushrooms, mustard greens, okra, onions, parsley, potatoes, radishes, rutabagas, scallions, spinach, sprouts, squashes, sweet potatoes, tomatoes, turnips, watercress, yams, zucchini, veggie burgers are an option if you are not allergic to soy.

All whole grains, including but not limited to whole wheat, brown rice, millet, quinoa, oats, barley, grits, whole wheat pasta, whole wheat tortillas, rice cakes and popcorn.

All nuts and seeds, including but not limited to sunflower seeds, cashews, peanuts, sesame. Also nut butters including peanut butter.

All legumes. These can be canned or dried. Legumes include but are not limited to dried beans, pinto beans, split peas, lentils, black eyed peas, kidney beans, black beans, cannellini beans, white beans.

All quality oils including but not limited to olive, canola, grape seed, peanut, and sesame.

Beverages: Spring water, distilled water or other pure waters.

Other: Tofu, soy products, vinegar, seasonings, salt, herbs and spices.

Foods to Avoid on the Daniel Fast

All meat and animal products including but not limited to beef, lamb, pork, poultry, and fish.

All dairy products including but not limited to milk, cheese, cream, butter, and eggs.

All sweeteners including but not limited to sugar, raw sugar, honey, syrups, molasses, and cane juice.

All leavened bread including Ezekiel Bread (it contains yeast and honey) and baked goods.

All refined and processed food products including but not limited to artificial flavorings, food additives, chemicals, white rice, white flour, and foods that contain artificial preservatives.

All deep fried foods including but not limited to potato chips, French fries, corn chips.

All solid fats including shortening, margarine, lard and foods high in fat.

Beverages including but not limited to coffee, tea, herbal teas, carbonated beverages, energy drinks, and alcohol.

Please make sure to **READ THE LABELS** when purchasing packaged, canned or bottled foods. They should be **sugar-free** and **chemical-free**. Keep this in mind as you review this list of acceptable food.

Day 1: Prayer & Fasting

*Take time to focus
your attention on God
and humble yourself
before Him.*

Fasting

Omit one meal

Scripture Reading


Daniel 9:2-3; Ezra 8:21; Matthew 6:16-18

Reflection & Journal Prompt

We often underestimate the importance of stillness. During this fast, you will not only abstain from certain foods and activities, but you should also spend a significant amount of time in prayer. Use this time to draw near to God. Slow down enough to hear the whispers of the Holy Spirit. Approach this fast with an open heart, a commitment to be present and the expectation that God will show you great and unsearchable things you do not know (Jer. 33:3).

As you begin this fast, what are some ways you can incorporate quiet time with God each day? What are you expecting God to reveal to you during this time?

Day 2: Gratitude & Celebration



*Praise God and give
thanks in all things.*

Fasting

Omit one meal

Scripture Reading


Psalm 16:7-9; Psalm 138:1-2; Mark 6:41

Reflection & Journal Prompt

Throughout Scripture, God's people are encouraged to give thanks. This invitation is not exclusive to moments when circumstances are good. Instead, we are to "give thanks in all things for this is the will of God for us" (1 Thes. 5:18). To practice these disciplines at all times will require intention, and in the valleys of life, thanksgiving (gratitude) is a sacrificial offering that our God will receive. Today, celebrate with a sacrifice of praise: worship along with one of your favorite praise songs to conclude your reflection time.

What are some reasons you have found it challenging to practice gratitude and celebration? When you reflect on who God has been in 2022, how does it encourage you to consistently celebrate and give thanks in 2023?

Day 3: Self-Examination & Confession



*Ask God to search
your heart and be open
to what is revealed.*

Fasting

(Partial Fast) 6 a.m. - 6 p.m. Liquids only (no coffee or strong drinks)

Scripture Reading


Psalms 139:23-24; 1 John 1:9; Matthew 24:25-28

Reflection & Journal Prompt

Oftentimes, we are unaware of our blind spots. This is why we need someone to bring them to our attention. Who better than God, the one who knows us fully - inside and out - and still loves us deeply. In his song *Indescribable*, Chris Tomlin expresses that God "sees the depths of our hearts and He loves us the same." God's unconditional love gives us peace with having Him to search our hearts and reveal our blind spots. Today, be like David and ask God to perform an examination of what's hidden within.

What did the Holy Spirit reveal to you during your heart examination? Write a prayer of confession regarding those things. What steps is God leading you to take in the new year?

Day 4: Community & Witness



*Encourage one another
and seek to build others
up in community.*

Fasting

(Partial Fast) 6 a.m. - 6 p.m. Liquids only (no coffee or strong drinks)

Scripture Reading

Isaiah 43:10; Hebrews 10:25; Matthew 18:20

Reflection & Journal Prompt

The past couple of years have proven the importance of being connected to a body of believers. It has also highlighted the many ways we can serve and support our community at large. As we go out into our community, we should remain mindful to let our light shine, so that God may be glorified (Matt. 5:16). Whenever Christians gather, we are blessed by God through one another and equipped to be a blessing to others - living as witnesses for Christ. Being a part of Christian community is truly a gift from God!

How has being in community been a blessing to you? What ways have you been able to bless others through being a part of the community? Pray about ways to connect and/or to re-engage in 2023.

Day 5: Bible Study & Meditation



Remove the distractions and make studying the Word of God a priority.

Fasting

Daniel Fast and Technology Fast - Unplug from television and social media for 24 hours (unless it is work related)

Scripture Reading

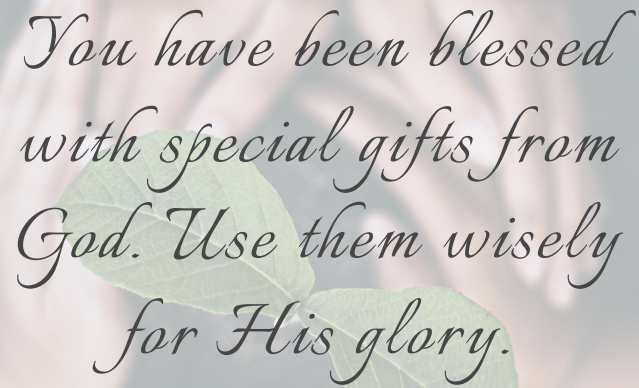
Joshua 1:8; Matthew 4:1-11

Reflection & Journal Prompt

The Bible reveals God's character and His heart for His creation. It shows us the calling that is ours as His witnesses to the world. The Psalmist declares that God's Word "is a lamp to my feet and a light to my path" (Psalm 119:105). In Matthew 4, Jesus also demonstrates the power of using the Word to combat the enemy when He attacks. In order to be led by God's Word and use it in our Christian walk, we must first know it. We increase in our knowledge of the Word, by the leading of the Holy Spirit, during times of study. Consider identifying a meditation Scripture for 2023 that will help you grow in your faith and/or remind you of God's power during times of spiritual battle.

In what ways can you increase your study of the Bible in 2023?

Day 6: Stewardship & Humility



*You have been blessed
with special gifts from
God. Use them wisely
for His glory.*

Fasting

Daniel Fast and Technology Fast - Unplug from television and social media for 24 hours (unless it is work related)

Scripture Reading

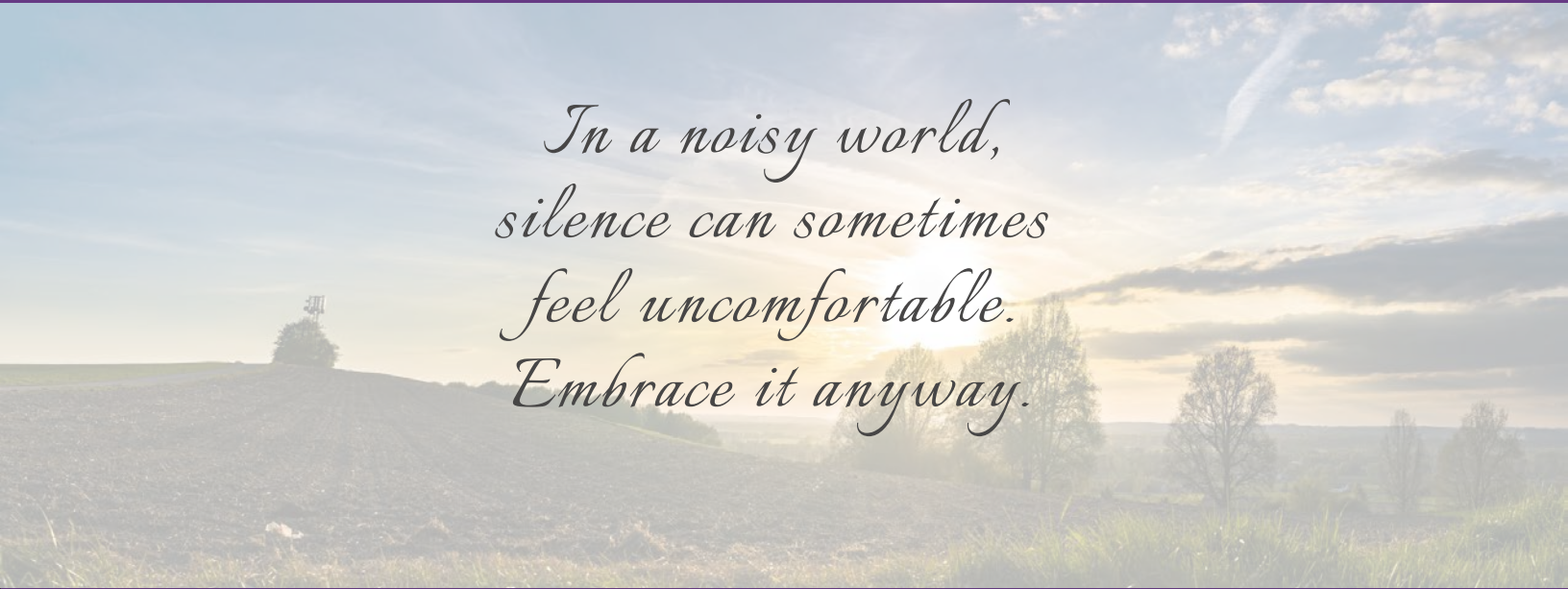
Micah 6:6-8; 1 Peter 4:10; Philippians 2:5-11

Reflection & Journal Prompt

Psalm 24 reminds us that the earth and everything in it is the Lord's. Think about that for a moment. Doesn't it bring about a sense of humility knowing that we have been entrusted as stewards over His creation? We are called to use what God has given us and to be faithful in our service to others. In all that we do and everywhere that we go, we should be reflecting the image of God. As you strive to be a good steward, remember to have a Christ-like mindset, one that is obedient and humble.

How can you practice being a good steward? What has God revealed to you about stewardship and humility in your life?

Day 7: Silence & Sabbath



*In a noisy world,
silence can sometimes
feel uncomfortable.
Embrace it anyway.*

Fasting

Daniel Fast and Technology Fast - Unplug from television and social media until noon (with the exception of worship service online)

Scripture Reading

Exodus 20:8; 1 Kings 19:11-12; Mark 2:23-28

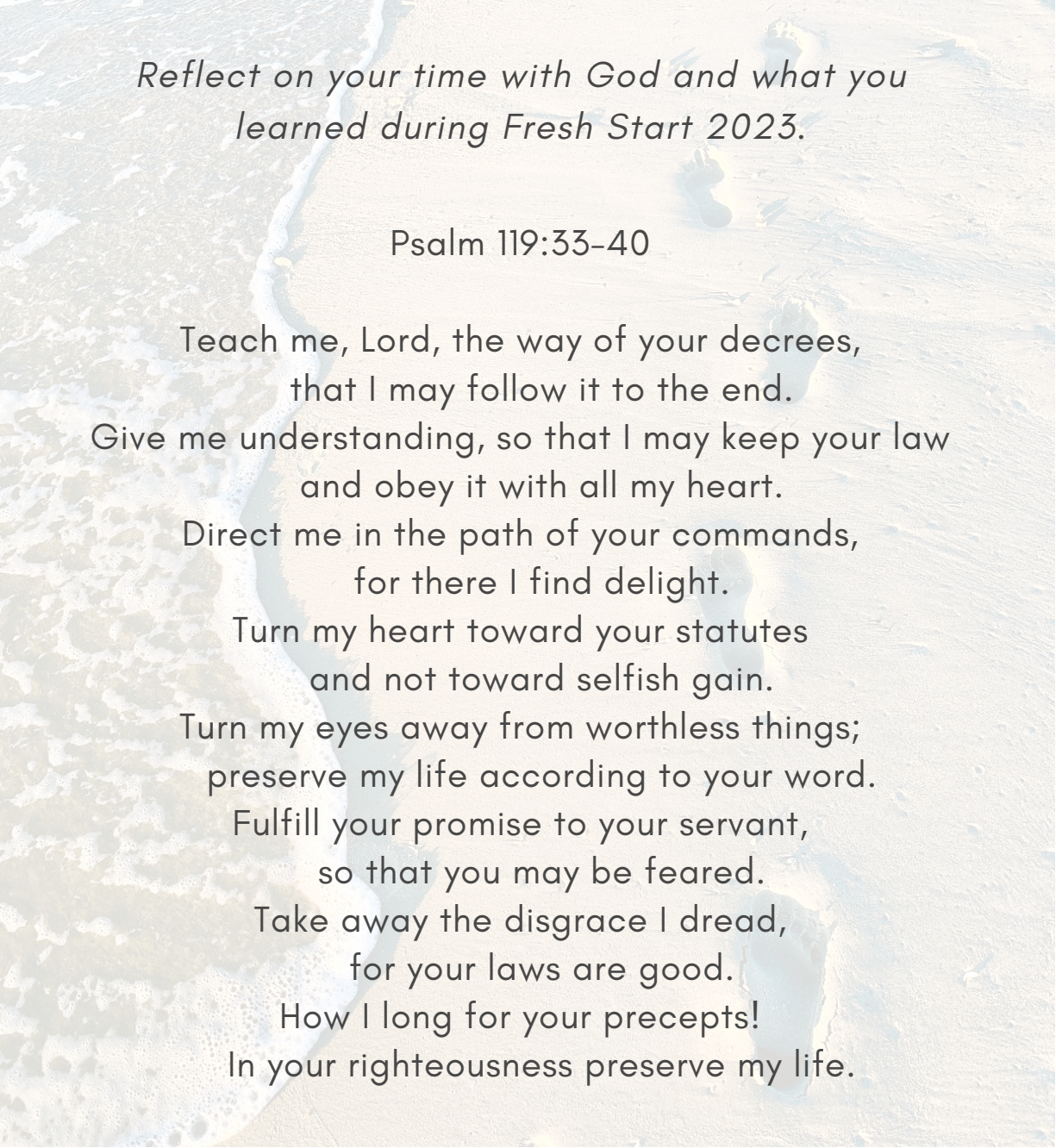
Reflection & Journal Prompt

Sabbath is not a religious practice that is meant to be a burden to believers. Sabbath is a gift from God where we rest from our work, take delight in Him and His creation. Jesus - not our to-do lists, the culture or the expectations of others - is the Lord of the Sabbath. Today, let's close out our time of fasting by receiving the gift of Sabbath. Spend time in communion with God, family and friends; enjoy activities that are life-giving to you, and *rest*.

Begin your journal time with two minutes of silence. What are some things that get in the way of you resting? How can you and your loved ones benefit from you practicing Sabbath? What do you hear God saying to you about spiritual disciplines, silence, and Sabbath?

Congratulations, you have completed the 7-day churchwide fast!
It is our prayer that you have been encouraged and are excited
about what God will do through you in 2023.

Remember, God's plan for your life is so much bigger than you can
imagine. Nothing is impossible with God, so approach this year with
bold faith, trusting that His promises for your life will be fulfilled!



*Reflect on your time with God and what you
learned during Fresh Start 2023.*

Psalm 119:33-40

Teach me, Lord, the way of your decrees,
that I may follow it to the end.
Give me understanding, so that I may keep your law
and obey it with all my heart.
Direct me in the path of your commands,
for there I find delight.
Turn my heart toward your statutes
and not toward selfish gain.
Turn my eyes away from worthless things;
preserve my life according to your word.
Fulfill your promise to your servant,
so that you may be feared.
Take away the disgrace I dread,
for your laws are good.
How I long for your precepts!
In your righteousness preserve my life.