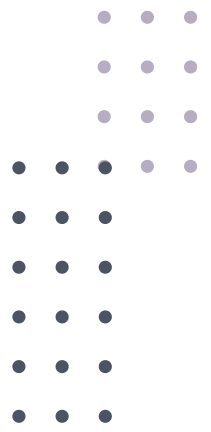


THE PARK CHURCH
7-DAY CHURCH-WIDE FAST



Fresh Start
ENGAGE

GET ENGAGED. SERVE WELL.

MONDAY, SEPTEMBER 11
-
SUNDAY, SEPTEMBER 17

2023

It's September, and that means we've reached the final church-wide fast of 2023. Throughout this year, we have spent time fasting and reflecting on what it takes to have a *Fresh Start*. The theme of this church-wide fast is *Fresh Start: Engage!* When we commit to being fully engaged in what God is doing through us and our church, we are better equipped to serve well. During the seven days of this fast, we will be incorporating both food and technology fasting. Get ready to spend time meditating on God's Word and key Biblical principles as we close out the year with a fresh spirit to serve.

As part of this *Fresh Start 7-Day Fast*, we encourage you to follow this daily fasting guide which includes the technology and food restrictions for each day, Bible reading, and reflective journal prompts. Be mindful to make prayer a part of your daily routine as you engage in this time of fasting. 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 or technology. The spiritual focus and growth will replace the normal presence of those things 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: Examine God's Purpose



Reflection & Journal Prompt by Minister Taura Glaze

Fasting

Select a food fast option from page 3.

Scripture Reading

Genesis 12:3

Reflection & Journal Prompt

Do you remember the story of Abraham? God invited him on a faith journey, promised to bless him and declared that he'd be a blessing (Genesis 12:1-2). As God's people we are both blessed and entrusted to be a blessing to others. Offering the time, talent, treasure given to us - is like an open faucet that releases the flow of God's blessings to those we serve; with this image in mind, Jesus is the model of an open faucet. Through His life of service, people have and will continue to experience the flow of God's redemptive love and its transformative power. The same holds true when we choose to follow Jesus' example. So every day, let's dare to pray this prayer offered by the authors of Experiencing God... 'Lord, show me where you're working and let me join you there'...and others will come to know Him as His blessings flow through us!

Where and who is God leading you to serve? How will you engage?

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Quote of the Day: *"We look more like Jesus when we are engaged in redemptive service."*

-Bishop Claude Richard Alexander, Jr.

Day 2: Employ Prayer



Reflection & Journal Prompt by Meleakia Spearing

Fasting

Select a food fast option from page 3.

Scripture Reading

Ephesians 6:10-18

Reflection & Journal Prompt

As we're given the opportunity to serve, we have tools to employ. While there are many at our disposal, there is one that positions our heart, our ears, our mind and our will to be in alignment with how God calls us to join Him in His work. Prayer is that tool. Prayer positions us to receive God's perspective on how can serve our friends, family, and community. We can rest assured that when we pray, God will respond and show us ways we can meet the needs of others.

Throughout Scripture, Jesus models this for us when He is often found praying, even as He is serving. We should aim to follow His example because prayer is the most powerful armor we can put on. So today, let's employ prayer and seek God's direction as we ask for a heart that is willing to serve.

Reflect on a time when you employed prayer to discern who and where to serve.

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Quote of the Day: "Every great movement of God can be traced to a kneeling figure." -
Dwight L. Moody

Day 3: Establish a Rhythm



Reflection & Journal Prompt by Minister Taura Glaze

Fasting

Technology Fast - Unplug from television, social media and other technology until noon (unless it is work related).

Scripture Reading

Matthew 11:28-30

Reflection & Journal Prompt

In part 2 of his book, *Emotionally Healthy Discipleship*, Peter Scazzero outlines what he considers to be the seven marks of Healthy Discipleship. The very first mark introduced in the section is the concept of *Being* (with God) before *Doing* (for God). With the various needs around us, it can be tempting to bypass the *Be*, and live in *Do* mode. As servant leaders, however, it is essential to establish the rhythm of *being* (spending time with God) before “jumping in” to serve others. When we take time to be with God, He fills our cups. When our cups are full, we can serve out of the overflow of what God has done in us first. Throughout Scripture Jesus is found living in this rhythm as He often withdraws for times of solitude and prayer with his Father. To serve well, like Jesus, commit to *being* with God before you *do*.

How will you be with God today?

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Quote of the Day: “A person who practices being before doing operates from a place of emotional and spiritual fullness, deeply aware of themselves, others and God. As a result, their being with God is sufficient to sustain their doing for God.” -Peter Scazzero

Day 4: Escape Competition



Reflection & Journal Prompt by Traci Ethridge

Fasting

Technology Fast - Unplug from television, social media and other technology during dinner time.

Scripture Reading

Colossians 3:17; 23-25

Reflection & Journal Prompt

Let's face it, we live in a culture where competition is all around us. It's celebrated and encouraged in so many areas of our lives. While competition may be necessary in certain settings, it is not something that should come to mind when we think about serving. In Colossians 3:17, we are reminded that "whatever you do, in word or deed, do everything in the name of the Lord Jesus, giving thanks to God the Father through Him." When we are clear on who we are working for and who we have been called to serve, we are less likely to approach it with a mindset of competition. Instead, we must recognize that our inheritance is already established and that is the ultimate reward. As we commit to being engaged in God's work, there is a spirit of obedience and humbleness that should be present. Let us remember that while we each have a race to finish, that race is not about competing with others, it is about being found a faithful servant.

How will you adjust your thinking to escape competition as you serve?

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Quote of the Day: "True success in any endeavor can only come when the Father has initiated the activity and invited our participation." -Priscilla Shirer

Day 5: Eliminate Comparison



Reflection & Journal Prompt by Traci Ethridge

Fasting

Technology Fast - Unplug from television, social media and other technology for the evening, starting at 5 p.m. (unless it is work related).

Scripture Reading

Galatians 5:25-26

Reflection & Journal Prompt

It can be easy to fall into the trap of comparison. It's a trap that can lead to self-doubt and insecurity, or drive us to act out of selfish ambition. When we begin to look at our lives in comparison to others, we are forgetting that we are God's handiwork and uniquely made. God created us with special gifts, and those gifts have a purpose in serving His kingdom. We are not honoring those gifts when we are consumed with comparison.

One way to eliminate comparison is to eliminate unhealthy influences in our lives. You know, the ones that redirect our focus and make us forget who truly establishes the work of our hands. Galatians 1:10 asks "Am I now trying to win the approval of human beings, or of God? Or am I trying to please people? If I were still trying to please people, I would not be a servant of Christ." As we serve, we should trust that God created us exactly how He needed us to be. And that alone is enough!

How can you guard yourself from the comparison trap?

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Quote of the Day: "Don't compare your life with others. There's no comparison between the sun and the moon. They shine when it's their time." -Anonymous

Day 6: Evolve in Patience



Reflection & Journal Prompt by Meleakia Spearing

Fasting

Select a food fast option from page 3.

Scripture Reading

Matthew 13:3-8

Reflection & Journal Prompt

In a world where people want rapid results, we have to be mindful that God calls us to trust His timing and pace. This requires a level of patience that may not always feel comfortable. Consider a gardener and their harvest. It takes time to prepare the soil, plant the seeds and eventually see what grows. Likewise, kingdom work also takes time. In James 1:4, we are reminded to “let patience have its perfect work, that you may be perfect and complete, lacking nothing.”

As we evolve in patience, we can hold steadfast to the knowledge that we serve a consistent Savior. One who is always covering, always guiding and always teaching to help us grow. The more we evolve in patience, the better prepared we are to serve.

When it comes to serving, how is God calling you to be patient and trust Him with the vision and outcome?

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Quote of the Day: “Above all, trust in the slow work of God.” -Pierre Teilhard de Chardin

Day 7: Embrace Community



Reflection & Journal Prompt by Traci Ethridge

Fasting

Select a food fast option from page 3.

Scripture Reading

1 Corinthians 12:4-6

Reflection & Journal Prompt

Have you ever felt overwhelmed by a big task but then realize it was never intended to be a one-person job? Not only that, but there were people ready to jump in and help if you would simply ask. Sometimes, we can get so focused on what we have to do and *our* role in something that we forget that there is power in community. A key part of serving well is serving together. Paul reminded the Corinthians that they are the body of Christ. If we consider his words in 1 Corinthians 12, we can conclude that every part of the body has a purpose and is essential. Therefore, we should embrace one another in the work to advance God's kingdom. Take a moment and reflect on all the ways The Park Church serves the Charlotte community and beyond. This work does not happen without people who are willing to partner, support, and uplift one another. It is not independent work, but rather collaborative, community-oriented acts of service.

How will you embrace community as you seek to serve?

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Quote of the Day: *"None of us, including me, ever do great things. But we can all do small things, with great love, and together we can do something wonderful."* -Mother Teresa

Congratulations, you have completed the 7-day church-wide fast! It is our prayer that you have been encouraged by meditating on God's Word and experienced a sense of renewal.

Even though this fast is complete, we hope that you will continue to practice these Biblical principles to get engaged and serve well!

Romans 12:6-13 (ESV)

Having gifts that differ according to the grace given to us, let us use them: if prophecy, in proportion to our faith; if service, in our serving; the one who teaches, in his teaching; the one who exhorts, in his exhortation; the one who contributes, in generosity; the one who leads, with zeal; the one who does acts of mercy, with cheerfulness.

Let love be genuine. Abhor what is evil; hold fast to what is good. Love one another with brotherly affection. Outdo one another in showing honor. Do not be slothful in zeal, be fervent in spirit, serve the Lord. Rejoice in hope, be patient in tribulation, be constant in prayer. Contribute to the needs of the saints and seek to show hospitality.