



Lifeway
CHRISTIAN CHURCH



Participants guide

Welcome to Lifeway's Prayer and Fasting Guide!

I can understand that right from the start that many of you will have questions, concerns and apprehensions regarding this opportunity to pray and fast for. While this document aims to serve you by providing some information around prayer and fasting, it won't ever be exhaustive or the final authority on the subject. Please talk to a Pastor/Elder more if you have concerns.

The goal of fasting is simply to draw nearer to God and put him first. Biblical fasting always has to do with eliminating distractions for a spiritual purpose; it hits the reset button of our soul and renews us from the inside out. It also enables us to celebrate the goodness and mercy of God and prepares our hearts for all the good things God desires to bring into our lives. Remember, your personal fast should present a level of challenge, but it is very important to know your body, your options, and, most importantly, to seek God in prayer and follow what the Holy Spirit leads you to do. There is no obligation. Everyone is free without any condemnation to choose if they participate or not.

If you have never fasted before, I just want to acknowledge your devotion and believe whole heartedly that you won't be doing so in vain. Fasting has been a major emphasis in the lives of many of the great spiritual leaders throughout history. John Wesley, the founder of the Methodist denomination, fasted every Wednesday and Friday and required all of his clergy to do the same. Effective ministers of God from the apostle Paul to Martin Luther to John Calvin made it a continual part of their walks with God. None of those men had a "formula fast" that was the only "right" way. Fasting is about the condition of the heart, not the number of days etc. So, let's examine what the bible teaches and then we will look at a few different types of fasts.

What does the Bible teach about fasting?

Biblical fasting involves abstaining from eating (and/or drinking) for spiritual purposes.

In the Old Testament, Israel celebrated certain annual fasts, the most prominent being the Day of Atonement.

There were also occasional fasts tied to specific historical events, sometimes individual and sometimes corporate. Here are a few of the occasions for fasting: at a time of grief (I Sam. 31:13; Nehemiah 1:4), at a time of repentance (I Sam 7:6; I Kings 21:27), as an expression of humility (Ezra 8:21; Psalm 69:10) and as an expression of a need for God's guidance and help. What all of these fasts share in common is that they were an expression of dependence on God.

Several New Testament passages give us insight about fasting.

Fasting teaches us to that God's Word nourishes us:

Matthew 4:1-4 records the only example of Jesus fasting, just prior to His being tempted in the wilderness. He faced temptation with these words, "Man shall not live on bread alone, but on every word that proceeds out of the mouth of God." Jesus is quoting Deuteronomy 8:3-5 which talks about the 40 years Israel spent in the wilderness, depending daily on manna to sustain them. He says that God humbled them and let them be hungry in order to teach them to depend on God's Word to sustain them. By His example of fasting, Jesus reminds us that food alone can't sustain us. We need to be nourished by God's Word.

Fasting teaches us that doing the will of God sustains us:

John 4:31-35 records Jesus' encounter with the woman at the well. When the disciples return, they encourage Jesus to eat. He responds by saying, "I have food to eat that you know not of." Then He adds, "My food is to do the will of the Father." Again, Jesus reminds us that food alone is not enough. We are sustained by doing God's will.

Fasting teaches us that Jesus Himself sustains us:

In John 6:48-50 Jesus says, "I am the bread of life. Your fathers ate the manna in the wilderness, and they died. This is the bread which comes down out of heaven, so that one may eat of it and not die." We see this pictured symbolically in the bread and the cup of the Lord's supper. Jesus is the source of eternal life. Fasting is feasting on Jesus.

Jesus assumed that fasting would be a part of His disciple's spiritual life. In Matthew 6:16-18, He says, "when you fast," not "if you fast." He warns us not to fast to impress people, but to be near to the heart of God.

What is the purpose of fasting?

Fasting is designed to intensify our dependence on God by weakening our dependence on food and other things. How does it do that?

Fasting reveals and heals our dependence on food (and other things) and instead allows us to place our dependency on God instead.

Richard Foster says, “More than any other discipline, fasting reveals the things that control us. This is a wonderful benefit to the true disciple who longs to be transformed into the image of Jesus Christ. We cover up what is inside us with food and other good things, but in fasting these things surface. If pride controls us, it will be revealed almost immediately. David writes, “I humbled my soul with fasting” (Psalm 69:10). Anger, bitterness, jealousy, strife, fear—if they are within us, they will surface during fasting.”

Fasting teaches us that we can go without getting what we want and survive. Fasting can free us from having to have what we want. Therefore, fasting can teach moderation or self-control, not only in relation to food, but in other areas as well. It teaches contentment. (1 Timothy 6:6)

Fasting expresses and deepens our hunger for God. Richard Foster says, “Fasting reminds us that we are sustained “by every word that proceeds from the mouth of God:” (Matt. 4:4). Food does not sustain us; God sustains us. In Christ, “All things hold together” (Colossians 1:17). Therefore, in experiences of fasting, we are abstaining from food or other activities and feasting on God’s Word.

Fasting must always, first and foremost, center on God. It must be about Him.

TYPES OF FASTS

Now that we have explored the Old and New Testament teaching and instruction on fasting, we can proceed to discuss specific kinds of fasts. Let us begin with the helpful words of Richard Foster in his classic, *Celebration of Discipline*: “As with all the Disciplines, a progression should be observed; it is wise to learn to walk well before we try to run.”

Biblical fasting almost always concerns food. Since the purpose of fasting, as we saw above, is to focus on God, to humble ourselves and to remind ourselves that we are sustained by every word that proceeds from the mouth of God, then the task in fasting is connecting our “going without” to “hungering for God.” This takes time, focus and prayer in itself. Please do not expect to be an “expert” at fasting right away. Fasting is a discipline that can take a very long time to understand well but don’t let this deter you or intimidate you.

TYPES OF FASTS

Supernatural Absolute Fast

This type of fast is seen in the bible where people like Moses and Elijah engaged in what must be considered a supernatural absolute fast of forty days where they did not eat and drink anything. (Deuteronomy 9:9; I Kings 19:8) It is called ‘supernatural’ as it is not natural for someone to fast in this way, for this long without God’s power. It is called an ‘absolute’ fast because it fasts both food and water. This is something that is not in our natural strength to achieve and therefore not recommended.

Absolute Fast

The difference here between the ‘supernatural absolute’ and the ‘absolute’ is the ability for the fast to be sustained. For anyone to fast for 40 days, it must be a supernatural (miraculous) experience. However, people can fast with no food or drink for a few days such as the Apostle Paul who went on an absolute fast for three days following his encounter with Jesus on the road to Damascus (Acts 9:9). It is called an ‘absolute’ fast because it fasts both food and water. This is not recommended.

Complete Fast

In this type of fast, you don’t eat solids and drink only liquids, typically water with light juices and broths as an option. It is assumed that Jesus fasted this way after his baptism where he ‘ate’ nothing for 40 days in the wilderness (Luke 4).

Selective Fast

This type of fast involves removing certain elements from your diet. One example of a selective fast is the Daniel Fast (Daniel 10:3), during which you remove meat, sweets, and bread from your diet and consume water and juice for fluids and fruits and vegetables for food.

Partial Fast

This fast is sometimes called the “Jewish Fast” and it doesn’t put any food off limits, it simply involves abstaining from eating any type of food for a period of time in the day. This can either correlate to specific times of the day, such as 6:00 am to 3:00 pm, or from sunup to sundown.

Soul Fast

This fast is a great option if you do not have much experience fasting food, have health issues that prevent you from fasting food, or if you wish to refocus certain areas of your life that are out of balance. For example, you might choose to stop using social media or watching television for the duration of the fast and then carefully bring that element back into your life in healthy doses at the conclusion of the fast.

A word of caution...

Once again, if you are doing any kind of food fast I urge you to take every precaution possible and begin slowly.

If you have any medical conditions or are taking any medication, please consult your GP before taking a fast and be wise to follow their recommendation.

If you do participate in a solid food fast, then I also strongly advise you to drink plenty of liquids. Obviously, if God leads you to undertake an ‘absolute’ fast, you should obey. If so, be certain, without doubt, that God is leading you. Do not do anything to try and ‘prove’ your devotion to God.

When it comes to making your final decision about what type of fast is right for you, the best advice I can give you is to follow the leading of the Holy Spirit. He will guide your heart and mind as to what is best for you. Remember, the most important consideration in fasting is your motive. Why are you fasting? To seek something personally from God's hand or to seek His face in worship, praise and thanksgiving?

Water-only fasts that last for more than several days need to be undertaken with complete rest and under medical supervision because of the extreme danger of over-toxification, breakdown of vital body tissues, and loss of electrolytes. If you have any known medical conditions, please speak to your GP before you begin.

If you have never fasted before then I personally recommend the 'selective or complete fast', where you deny yourself solid food. During these fasts you are still able to consume liquids such as water, juices and broths. This type of fasting will provide you with more energy than absolute or water-only fasts and still lead you into the humbling experience of denying your desire for solid food that you can chew.

This season of prayer and fasting will be aided and accompanied by several tools in this document, including: a Biblical guide to fasting, different fasting options, and a prayer guide for each day that includes a central Biblical passage, a brief devotional thought, reflection questions, and a prayer.

We eagerly wait on what the Lord will do for us, in us and through us during this special time of prayer and fasting.

I keep asking that the God of our Lord Jesus Christ, the glorious Father, may give you the Spirit of wisdom and revelation, so that you may know Him better. I pray that the eyes of your heart may be enlightened in order that you may know the hope to which He has called you, the riches of His glorious inheritance in His holy people, and His incomparably great power for us who believe. - Ephesians 1:17-19a

My Fasting Plan

Choosing your fasting plan is a very personal decision. We are all at different places in our walk with God and our spirituality should never be a cause for comparison or competition. There is nothing more “inherently spiritual” about one type of fast as opposed to another. Your personal fast should present a level of challenge to it, but know your body, know your options, and most importantly, seek God in prayer about this and follow what the Holy Spirit leads you to do. It’s also important to not let what you eat or do not eat become the focus of your fast. This is a time to disconnect enough with your regular patterns and habits in order to connect more closely to God.

If you do not choose to fast, or no matter what kind of fast you choose, seek God with us in prayer.

Step 1: clarify the purpose of your fast

Why are you fasting? Ask the Holy Spirit to clarify His leading and objectives for your prayer fast. This will enable you to pray more specifically and strategically. Fasting is God-led and God-initiated. That means that He fuels a desire to fast and pray. He loves it when we fast.

Step 2: specify the kind of fast you will do

Pray about the kind of fast you should undertake. Jesus implied that all of His followers should fast. (Matthew 6:16-18; 9:14,15) For Him it was a matter of when believers would fast, not if they would do it. Before you fast,

Decide the following up front:

- How long you will fast?
- The type of fast God wants you to undertake - discussed in the *Types of Fasts* section.
- What physical or social activities you will restrict?
- How much time each day you will devote to prayer and God’s Word?

Making these commitments ahead of time will help you sustain your fast when physical temptations and life’s pressures tempt you to abandon it.

Step 3: prepare your heart, mind, and body for fasting

Fasting is not a spur-of-the-moment thing. It is planned. We must prepare. The very foundation of fasting and prayer is repentance. Unconfessed sin can hinder your prayers. There are several things you can do to prepare your heart

- Fasting requires reasonable precautions. Consult your GP first, especially if you take prescription medication or have a chronic ailment. Some persons should never fast without professional supervision.
- Do not rush into your fast. Prepare your body. Eat smaller meals before starting a fast. Avoid high fat and sugary foods. Eating raw fruit and vegetables prior to your fast is helpful. Physical preparation makes the drastic change in your eating routine a little easier so that you can turn your full attention to the Lord in prayer.
- Prepare your heart and mind: Remember that God is your Father and He loves you and is for you.
- Confess every sin that the Holy Spirit calls you to remember and accept God's forgiveness (1 John 1:9). Seek forgiveness from all whom you have offended, and forgive all who have hurt you (Mark 11:25; Luke 11:4; 17:3,4). Make restitution as the Holy Spirit leads you.
- Surrender your life fully to Jesus Christ (Romans 12:1, 2). Meditate on the attributes of God, His love, sovereignty, power, wisdom, faithfulness, grace, compassion, and others. (Psalm 48:9,10; 103:1-8, 11-13)
- Begin your time of fasting and prayer with an expectant heart. (Hebrews 11:6)
- Do not underestimate spiritual opposition. Satan sometimes intensifies the natural battle between body and spirit. (Galatians 5:16,17)
- Finally, and of deep importance, Jesus instructs us in Matthew to not let others know about your fasting. The strict details of your fast should not be something you constantly talk about to others. It should remain between you and God.

The purpose of my fast is:

The type of fast I plan to do is:

The length of time I will fast is:

Are there any other activities I need to restrict?

When and how much time do I plan to Pray and read the Bible?

My Prayer and Fasting friend is

How to use the devotional and prayer guide

Over the following pages, I have put together a daily devotional guide for you to use. It includes some bible verses that have been selected to best assist you while you pray and fast, a short devotional to encourage you and some reflection questions for you to consider. It finishes with a prayer. I have also left you some space for journal notes. Perhaps you might sense God speak to you, maybe you have questions or other thoughts. Its always good to write it down.

7-day prayer and devotional guide

Day 1

A vessel to be filled must first be emptied.

- **2 Kings 4:3-7:** Then he said, “Go, borrow vessels from everywhere, from all your neighbours—empty vessels; do not gather just a few. And when you have come in, you shall shut the door behind you and your sons; then pour it into all those vessels, and set aside the full ones.”
- **2 Corinthians 4:7**
(NASB): But we have this treasure in earthen vessels, so that the surpassing greatness of the power will be of God and not from ourselves.

As we begin our 7 days of prayer and fasting, I thought it might be helpful to start with a devotion on the story of the widow’s oil. If you go and read the story in 2 Kings 4:1-7, you will notice some amazing aspects. The most obvious is that oil flowed out of the small bottle and into one of the borrowed containers, and it kept on flowing. By a miracle,

through the promise of God, the laws of physics were temporarily suspended and a small bottle of oil filled many larger containers.

The other aspect was that the widow gathered the vessels in faith, and the measure of the miracle was determined by the measure of her faith in gathering. In this case, the only limit was the limit of what she made available to God. When one container was filled she set it aside and went on to the next empty vessel, until they were all filled.

One more thing to consider: all those borrowed vessels also had to be *empty* before they could be filled with oil.

Charles Spurgeon said, “A full Christ is for empty sinners, and for empty sinners only... It is not our emptiness, but our fullness which can hinder the outgoings of free grace.”

God can work miracles through our emptiness – as long as faith is ready to receive His filling. His strength is perfected in our weakness (2 Corinthians 12:9).

Reflect:**Journal notes**

In what ways is your fasting 'emptying' yourself?

Are there other areas of your life that need to be handed over in prayer to God, to make room for him during this time of prayer and fasting?

Prayer:

Lord, make me an empty vessel. Help me see the areas that I need to let go of in order to make more room for you.

Give me the strength to lay them down and to allow your Spirit to fill me up instead.

Over these 7 days would you come and fill me with your Spirit, allow me to become so less of myself and so full of you, that I cant help but be poured out for the benefit of others.

Amen

Day 2

To increase our appetite for God

- **Matthew 5:5-6:** Blessed are those who hunger and thirst after righteousness for they will be filled.

Our appetites can dictate the direction of our lives — whether it be the cravings of our stomachs, the passionate desire for possessions or power, or a hunger for approval and acceptance from others. Our appetites reveal what we truly are hungering for.

As a Christian, the hunger for anything besides God can be a real danger. As John Piper puts it, “If we don’t feel strong desires for the manifestation of the glory of God, it is not because you have drunk deeply and are satisfied. It is because we have nibbled so long at the table of the world. Our soul is stuffed with small things, and there is no room for the great.” If we are full of what the world offers, then the hope is that this fast that we are on together might express, or even increase, our soul's appetite for God.

But what a fast like this also does is expose the things that we have become so reliant on to fill us. So whenever you feel hungry, or whenever you feel tempted to engage in the thing you are fasting from, do what you can to draw near to God. The whole idea of fasting is to make room for God. Do the faithful activities that will build healthy ‘uphill’ habits. What we feed on, we will increase our appetite towards. So feed on the thing that will really fill you and fulfil you. Only when you are most satisfied in him, will God be most glorified through you.

Reflect:

What is your ‘go-to’ snack? When you’ve had a long day or a difficult encounter with someone, or just want to ‘escape’ what is your fix?

Is it social media? Chocolate or Fast food? Maybe it’s an episode of the latest series on Netflix? Or perhaps it’s shopping?

Sometimes when we want a little ‘pick me up’ we head toward the things I mentioned earlier, but could it be, that what we are really craving is something much deeper?

Prayer:

Heavenly Father, would you convict me that my deeper need is you. Allow me to identify when I am weak in spirit and flesh and what will best help me in those times. Help me to make room for you. Thank you that you know what is before me, help me Lord, to take the risk to lay things down and put things aside so that I can make time for you. To know that my world won't come to a stop, if I lay aside my will, in order to align with your will.
In Jesus name, Amen.

Journal notes

Day 3

Our God is a way maker

- **Isaiah 43:16** *I am the Lord, who opened a way through the waters, making a dry path through the sea.*
- **Romans 8:28** And we know that in all things God works for the good of those who love him, who^[a] have been called according to his purpose.

We have recently been singing a new song during our times of worship together; 'way maker' made popular by the artist Leeland.

It's a song that speaks of God's provision and the ability for us to choose to trust him in those times that seem somewhat despairing and when we can't see him at work.

Lets face it, faith is easy when we see God's hand at work in our lives. But what about when those prayers don't get answered, people don't get healed and we feel that God has overlooked us? How does our faith stack up then? Well thankfully we get reminded

time and time again that God is at work, and scripture repeatedly reminds us of that. But is it enough?

Is it enough for us to read something such as a verse like that one in Romans 8:28 of God working all things together for our good?

Sure reading these types of scriptures give us some hope, But... is hope enough?

I don't think hope, is ever a good strategy. Yes it give us some inspiration and a place to start but I don't ever think that hope can take us all the way.

Instead, where God meets us is in our faithful activities. You see faith isn't hope. Faith is a verb, it's an action, it has a sound, it does something. So instead of waiting, get active, show God that you are willing to operate even though you might not feel him, hear him or see him. Why, because that is what faith really is all about.

Reflect:

In what ways could God be calling you to 'exercise' your faith?

How will you choose to see God, even when you can't see him working in your life?

Prayer:

Lord, I know there will be times when the things you do will be hidden from me. But in those times I will choose to trust you and see you as the 'way-maker, promise keeper and light in the darkness'.

Help my faith grow. Allow my faith to become active.
In Jesus name, Amen.

Journal notes

Day 4

It's a connection issue.

- **Ezekiel 20:19-20** I am the Lord your God; follow my decrees and be careful to keep my laws. Keep my Sabbaths holy, that they may be a sign between us. Then you will know that I am the Lord your God.
- **Mark 2:28** Then he said to them, “The Sabbath was made for man, not man for the Sabbath. So the Son of Man is Lord even of the Sabbath.”
- **John 15:1-4:** “I am the vine, and my Father is the gardener. He cuts off every branch in me that bears no fruit, while every branch that does bear fruit he prunes so that it will be even more fruitful...Remain in me, and I will remain in you. No branch can bear fruit by itself; it must remain in the vine. Neither can you bear fruit unless you remain in me.”

The other day, I tried to wirelessly print from my laptop in my office to the printer in the

church office. This normally isn't an issue, I've been connected before and have been able to print before this. Why not now?

I checked the printer, the problem has to be with the printer I thought (the problem is never with us right?), so I started checking the internet connection, all the cables, and time and time again, as I tried to print, my laptop told there was – wait for it- ‘a connection issue’.

I don't have time for connection issues! “I have things that need to get done”, I told my laptop.

In the end, I was running out of options and decided to restart my laptop – BINGO! It worked.

At the mid point of our week of fasting, you may be tired. You may be wondering how you will be able to finish the remainder of the week. You may be overwhelmed with the things you have to do and the little time and energy you have to do them in.

The answer is simple. The sabbath

The Sabbath is designed to reset ourselves. It's like me restarting my laptop

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The Sabbath is so important to God and so important for us that God modeled it for us in the creation story in Genesis. It was also given to Moses by God to be included in the ten commandments. Jesus also calls himself the 'Lord of the Sabbath' to identify that the Sabbath is a connection issue. When we connect to Jesus, we connect to the Lord of the Sabbath. In him we not only find our purpose, and our work but we also find our rest.

God's plan for us is to work and rest but the Sabbath is much deeper than just resting. When we rest, we still ourselves and we reset for what is ahead. We remind ourselves of who God is, and recognise that what he's called us to do is so much bigger than ourselves that our dependency on God is completely necessary.

We must remain in Him to be filled with the power of the Holy Spirit. If we put God first and stay connected to Him, He will give us the strength and power to do the tasks He has set before us.

It takes discipline to keep our sabbath at the top of the priority list. Especially, when there are so many other things fighting to be at the top of the list. The Bible is very clear though, in that if we are to bear fruit we must stay connected to the vine. He will prune us to bear fruit and cut off what is not bearing fruit for His purpose. It's a connection issue.

Reflect:

How seriously do you keep a Sabbath?

Where will you find more time in your schedule to stay connected to the Vine?

Prayer:

Father God, I pray for you to help me stay connected to the Vine. Lord, I desire you in every aspect of my life. Please prune off the things that are not important and get in the way of my time with You. I know that I can only fulfill your purpose for me by being filled with Your Holy Spirit. Help me schedule some time with you that reflects my dependency of you and devotion to be in your presence. Amen.

Day 5

Doing life together

- **Hebrews 10:25:** And let us consider how we may spur one another on toward love and good deeds, ²⁵ not giving up meeting together, as some are in the habit of doing, but encouraging one another—and all the more as you see the Day approaching.

People can be difficult. You don't need me to tell you that. As much as you probably don't want to think about it, you (yes you) have been a difficult person for someone else at some point along the journey. But I'm guessing you have also been a source of love and support. Relationships, friendships, colleagues, family, in fact whoever you do life alongside—at one point or another it's just gonna get a little messy. But here's the thing, we are not designed to do life in isolation. The Christian life was never intended to be a solitary one. Jesus shared His life with twelve disciples and then taught them to share it with others. The early believers

gathered together to break bread and share the living Word. What we do each week in church is an expression of shared belief in Jesus – His body, a community of faith that gains strength and courage through teaching and worship.

But a full and meaningful life of following Jesus is built on much more than one hour a week in church. It requires personal devotion and an interdependency with others in prayer, study, fellowship, and praise. In other words, the best way to follow and serve Jesus is in community.

This is why we meet in smaller groups called 'Lifegroups'. These groups are a smaller more intimate version of our larger church gathering. The purpose is to be a place for love, acceptance, prayer, and to celebrate what Jesus is doing among us.

Finding time to share our hearts, burdens, and triumphs is important, as well as encouraging each other to stay strong in the Lord (Ephesians 6:18). God loves His church to the point where we are called his 'bride'. And how can we say we love God, if we are not loving his church in which he

Journal notes

loves. Therefore it is important that we are gathering together, building the habit of worshiping together, growing and learning together and serving together. It is critical to becoming the people God desires for us to become. We are the vehicle of making Jesus known to a world that doesn't know him – yet.

Reflection:

Identify those people whom you are most grateful for. Have you let them know how important they are to you and how grateful you are for them?

Are you purposefully meeting together with others for fellowship, prayer, learning and serving?

Prayer:

Dear God, would you lead me into deeper communion and fellowship with you and with my community of faith. Use me to be a source of encouragement and direction with the people that I meet with. Help me to overcome any obstacles to see that community is important for me to grow and be strengthened.

Day 6

To be strengthened in God

- **James 2:2-4:** Consider it pure joy, my brothers and sisters,^[a] whenever you face trials of many kinds, because you know that the testing of your faith produces perseverance. Let perseverance finish its work so that you may be mature and complete, not lacking anything.
- **Psalm 107:20:** He sent out his word and healed them; he rescued them from the grave.

The Scripture says in Matthew 4:1, “Jesus was led up by the (Holy) Spirit into the wilderness to be tempted by the devil.” It was God the Holy Spirit that placed Jesus in that desert for that particular time. There are no mistakes in God’s plan. There is no plan B. We only know His complete plan for our lives as we look backward. A.W. Tozer said, “To the child of God, there is no such thing as an accident. Accidents may indeed appear to befall him and misfortune stalk his way; but these evils will be so in

appearance only and will seem evil only because we cannot read the secret script of God’s hidden providence.”

When ‘bad’ things happen it’s easy for us to question why it would happen to us. It’s even possible in these moments to question God’s love for us. I know I have experienced this in my own life.

Of course when we read the Scriptures we are confronted with the overwhelming evidence that even the most zealous and devout people had their share of difficulties. Remember these men and women: Hagar, Joseph, Job, David, the Apostle Paul, the disciples and even Jesus Himself, fulfilling the Father’s will, was nailed on a cross until dead. So as you can see, just because we are saved, we are not inoculated from sin, and its consequences.

Peter wrote in I Peter 4:12, “Beloved, do not be surprised at the fiery ordeal among you, which comes upon you for your testing, as though some strange thing were happening to you. . .” In other words, we should not be surprised when we find ourselves in painful, frightening, difficult, or impossible situations.

As a matter of fact, these things are to be expected in this venture of following Christ.

But what is different, is that when we go through these experiences, is the confidence 'that in **all** things, (yes **ALL** things) God works for the good of those who love him' (Romans 8:28).

God is at work in our problems and pain and is working for our good. He uses such things to do a deeper work at times. So hang in there, find comfort and support from other Christians, remembering that we have been promised by God that he will never leave us nor forsake us (Hebrews 13:5). God is never distant.

Reflect:

Are you in a difficult place right now? As you draw close to God, ask him to speak to you. What is he wanting you to know at this time.

Prayer:

Father God, You know everything about me. You know the challenges and the hope that I need. I pray that you would guide my prayers, thoughts, and actions. I pray that you would give me spiritual eyes to see you in my life and give me the desire and ability to respond in a way that pleases you. Teach me what you want me to learn and help me to grow closer to you each day.

Journal notes

Day 7

To continue to seek God first

- **Jeremiah 29:13:** You will seek me and find me when you seek me with all your heart.
- **1 Chronicles 29:13:** Now devote your heart and soul to seeking the Lord your God.
- **Colossians 3:2:** Set your minds on things above, not on earthly things.

During the series of Uphill Habits, I talked about what might be considered the most important habit of all, that is, *I'm going to focus on what I do first.*

You see, what we do first is incredibly important for what is to follow. I remember watching an episode of Dr Phil who once said (say this in your best southern American accent) "The best predictor of future behaviour is past behaviour". Why? Because we are wired for repetition, we remember and we do. And therefore we quickly form habits.

We see this in the bible through different principles, of repetition such as tithing, taking communion and keeping Sabbath.

All designed to deliver a deeper truth, a fuller experience than just the participation of each.

If we want to see progress, we have to form new habits and change the old patterns. And that can be hard, but it is doable. In fact you've shown that by doing this for the last seven days.

Through your prayer and fasting, you have hit the reset button. No matter how well you think you have done, you've done it, but it doesn't stop here. This seven days has the potential to set new habits and patterns in motion. Now you have begun, its time now for this to continue.

Reflect:

What things has God shown you about your life through this season of prayer and fasting?

How can you continue to pray daily and seek God through Scripture now that our 7 days of prayer and fasting are ending?

What 'habits' will you commit to intentionally doing in order to seek God daily?

Journal notes

Prayer:

Father God, thank You for these last 7 days of focusing on you. Thank you for the promise that you will be found when I seek you. Thank you that you don't hide from me but that you constantly draw me near to you.

Please put a hunger and a thirst in my life for you Lord. You are so amazing. So forgiving. So good. From this moment I am deciding to chase after you with all of my heart. I will choose to put you first and seek you daily. Amen.

CONGRATULATIONS!!!

You've completed your seven days of prayer and fasting.

**This prayer and fasting guide
was compiled with the help
of the following resources:**

Turning points (Fairhaven
ministries 2014)

Prayer and Fasting by Dr Bill
Bright (CRU 2018)

Celebration of Disciplines by
Richard Foster