

*Prelude
To
Prayer and Fasting*



*First Emanuel Baptist Church
Church School Lessons
Fall 2017*

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To help you start planning for the Journey, here are a few suggested supplies. Plan and calendar your prayer and meditation time. Consider listing people, things and situations that stress you. Begin praying for discernment of God's will for the fast.

Journal/Notebook

Pens/Pencils

Highlighter

Study Bible

Bible Research App

Calendar

Water

Kleenex

Humility

Faith

Obedience



On Wednesday, October 4, 2017, at 12:01 a.m., we begin our journey. First Emanuel's 8th corporate fast will commence.

“A Prelude to Prayer and Fasting” has been created for our Church School. The lessons offer guidance and direction on preparing to enter into a period of prayer and fasting.

“A Prelude to Prayer and Fasting” is a time for us to come together for study and conversation about the discipline of prayer and fasting. It is time for you to pray for clarity and direction for the journey.

Our vision for this writing is a ***personal study guide***. We will use the material in this guide for weekly church school lessons; however you are free to study ahead of us. We do encourage you to complete your studies in this series prior to the first day of our fast, October 4, 2017.

When a fast is called by the man of God, it is God that has given the vision. Pastor Southall has shared the vision God has given for the year of 2017. Our corporate prayer all year has been the lives of men and seeking those that are outside of the Body of Christ. This prayer-focus continues. We are now adding the fasting component of the vision. Do not take this call to fast lightly. To enter into a period of fasting is a vow between you and God. (***Numbers 6:2***) A fast is Holy and sacred before God. In ***Isaiah 58***, God rejected the fast of the people. God found their fast was lacking in sincerity and Holiness. God resented that the people took for granted the power and authority of a fast. God revealed that he honors fasts and the yokes of oppression and poverty are broken through fasting. ***Isaiah 58:5-7***

ASSIGNMENT

Study Isaiah 58. In your study you are going to create three lists. First, list the complaints God has against the people. Second, list what God identifies as the purpose for a fast. Finally, list the breakthroughs that God identifies as a result of fasting.



Many of us enter into corporate or personal periods of fasting and prayer prematurely. ***It is premature*** because we enter distracted. ***It is premature*** because we have not grasped the significance of separation. It is premature because we mindlessly and prayerlessly determine the food, liquid, or activities we are going to fast from or sacrifice. ***We forget to seek guidance from the Holy Spirit on what and how to fast.***

A process of consecration is necessary before we enter into this most Holy and sacred space with God. The following are excerpts from scripture that reveal God's requirements of us when we commit to separate and consecrate ourselves before God.

- Numbers 6:3 – "...He shall separate himself from..."
 - Numbers 6:4 – "...He shall eat nothing..."
 - Numbers 6:8 – "All the days of his separation he *is* holy ..."
- (Please take the time to study Numbers 6:1-8 in its entirety.)***

SIN & FASTING

Sin separates us from God. We have to separate ourselves from sin. In the beginning, on the sixth day, God created man as "*a living soul*" **not** *live flesh*. This shell of the body houses our soul. The soul preserves LIFE and defies DEATH. God foreordained the process by which our very soul would be incubated from death and destruction. God sacrificed His Glory that He may redeem us "*And changed the glory of the uncorruptible God into an image made like to corruptible man...* (Romans 1:23). It is by the blood of the lamb that we are able to be "*...born again not of corruptible seed, but of incorruptible, by the word of God, which liveth and abideth for ever.* (1 Peter 1:23)

ASSIGNMENT

Study Numbers 6:1-8. Separation, consecration, and Holy are a common thread in these 8 verses. Outline what God says about taking a vow of a Nazirite. How is this similar to taking a vow to enter into a period of fasting and prayer?



Consider starting this process by giving yourself *permission to be selfish*. In the weeks and days leading up to the fast, shamelessly make it all about you, that is, *you and God*.

Many of us are oblivious to the fact that we are experiencing a spiritual deficit. We have created a routine of prayer whereby we plunge into praying for everyone but ourselves. If we allow ourselves to constantly be distracted by parasitic symbiotic relationships and *exhaust ourselves by saying “Yes”* to everyone but self and God, we miss out on the Holiness of separation unto our God. Commit to memory **Numbers 6:8** “*All the days of his separation he is holy unto the LORD.*”

The life of Christ yields innumerable examples of the importance of separation in order to maintain that pre-ordained relationship with God (*Luke 6:12 and John 6:15*). Jesus understood His position and purpose in life. Jesus knew the destructive nature of sin and, therefore, always maintained a constant position of prayer and obedience to the Word. As you prepare yourself to enter into this 40 day fast, ask these questions: (1) Am I in position? (2) Are the relationships or activities that I have allowed myself to be entangled with damaging my relationship with God? (3) Are any of my relationships or activities hindering my spiritual growth? And, (4) Have I forsaken my “*living soul*” for the temporary pleasures of my “*live flesh?*”

ASSIGNMENT

Set aside time today to lay prostrate before God or kneel before God. Acknowledge sin. Seek God for forgiveness. Ask God to bless you with the gifts of wisdom, and discernment. Believe God for his Word. Trust God to guide you through this process.



Contemplate what prayer is to your life. Our vision for this lesson is not to tell you how to pray, when to pray, where to pray or any other directive on prayer. Prayer is about you and God. The model prayer Jesus taught to the disciples is a sufficient guide to prayer. (Matthew 6:5-13)

Our vision for this lesson is to encourage intimate study and prayer about Prayer. Below we have captured classifications of prayer through scripture. The examples below will hopefully stir something in you to begin to process what prayer is to you.

PRAYER IS:

Prayer is personal. (*Mark 11:24; Psalm 69:13*)

Prayer is intimate. (*Luke 6:12*)

Prayer rises from the soul. (*Psalm 35:13*)

Prayer invokes the presence of God. (*Daniel 9:21*)

Prayer is an act of submission. (*Matthew 5:44*)

Prayer is intentional, purposeful, sacred, Holy.

(*1 Timothy 4:4-6*)

Prayer is you and God. (*Psalm 5:2*)

Prayer is God and you. (*Revelation 8:3*)

Prayer is timeless. (*Luke 21:36*)

Prayer is peace. (*Jeremiah 29:7*)

Prayer is loud. (*Psalm 55:17*)

Prayer is passionate. (*Nehemiah 1:6*)

Prayer pierces the heart of our God. (*2 Kings 20:5*)

Prayer has no boundaries. Why?

Prayer has no formula. Why?



Fasting raises three common questions – how to, when to, and what to? The most simplistic answer for all attempts to define fasting is discipline. It is the discipline of denying the flesh and nurturing our spiritual man/woman. Discipline of the flesh will never contradict any definition of fasting. Whether you are of the opinion that fasting is limited to food, or eliminating and sacrificing certain pleasures of life, it is all about your commitment to separate from anything that hinders a more perfected relationship with God. The separation will allow you to better hear the voice of God. Only God can answer those three common questions – how to fast, when to fast, and what to fast?

Engaging in a period of fasting and prayer is intentional and purposeful. This means you have to be in tune with the physical body and with your spiritual being. God ordains your fast. God will confirm for you the food, object, or activity from which you are to sacrifice or fast. In a fast, your flesh no longer has authority to control your appetite, actions, or thoughts. The Holy Spirit is in charge. The Holy Spirit reveals all truth to us. The absence of the power and authority of the Holy Spirit in your fast will diminish this to nothing more than a 40 day crash diet.

DON'T DIET, FAST



ASSIGNMENT

Find instances in the bible where God led his people to a fast. Ask God to reveal to you what you are to fast as well as the purpose for your fast.

TYPES OF FASTS

- **Absolute Fast**
 - **Moses** engaged in an **absolute fast** on Mount Sinai when he did not eat for 40 days and 40 nights: ***Exodus 34 :28.***
 - **Esther**, after learning of King Ahasuerus' decree to destroy, massacre, and exterminate all of the Jews, Esther led the people into an absolute fast: **Esther 4:16**
 - **Jonah 3:7-8**
- **Partial fast:** Daniel abstained from eating meat or drinking wine. It appears that he only ate vegetables: **Daniel 10:3**

PURPOSEFUL AND INTENTIONAL FASTS

Protection and guidance – Ezra 8:21-22

Healing & Deliverance – Matthew 17:18-21

Breaking of Yokes – Isaiah 58:6

Forgiveness of Sin – Daniel 9:3-5

Salvation – Acts 10:34 - 44

Fasting may end up being a diet if we are missing the following key components:

- **A period of separation and prayer prior to a fasting period**
- **Dedicated Time with God**
- **Prayer**
- **Praise (Corporate & Private)**
- **Worship (Corporate & Private)**
- **Meditation**
- **Listening for God's voice**
- **Reading, hearing, and studying the Word of God**

Remember:

- The key to God honoring your fast is that your fast is unto God.
- A fast unto God will not be harmful to your health.
 - Allow the Holy Spirit to guide you in the type of fast or the things from which you are to abstain in order to truly experience intimate time with God.
- An absolute fast **does not mean** that you will fast from all liquids and all food for the entire 40 days and 40 nights. An absolute fast can last as short as a few hours that you have designated to abstain from food or drink while in prayer and meditation with God.
- God honors and measures our hearts.
- If for medical reasons you are unable to fast from food, abstention and sacrifice of whatever the Holy Spirit leads you to is pleasing and acceptable to God.

ASSIGNMENT

Inform your doctor that you will begin a 40 day fast. Discuss any health concerns you may have. As God reveals to you how to proceed in the fast, write it down. Research. Go to the Library, a bookstore, or online to learn about healthy food choices and responsible practices during a prolonged period of fasting.

JOURNEY OF *Faith*

God is calling for a consecrated time of prayer and fasting for First Emanuel. We are a body of Baptized believers with a specific assignment from God. As the Body of Christ our mission is Kingdom building. As a disciple of Christ, God has chiseled out a specific purpose for us in Kingdom. This is why the discipline of fasting and prayer is critical in a Christian's spiritual development and growth and ultimately the ministry that God has ordained for our lives. We need to be able to discern the voice of God as God instructs us to move and as God moves in our lives. We cannot build when one part of the body is tearing down. We cannot effectively lift when we allow the distractions of the world to overwhelm us. Finally, we cannot fulfill the call of God until we yield our wounded and broken vessels to God for his miraculous restorative power.

How do we enter into this journey?

- ◆ Enter with ***great expectation*** of hearing from God.
(*Romans 8:18-26; Psalm 62:5*)
- ◆ Enter full of ***faith***.
(*Hebrews 11:6; Revelation 14:12*)
- ◆ Enter in ***anticipation*** of the manifestation of miracles, signs, and wonders.
(*Hebrews 2:3-4*)
- ◆ Enter with all your being, ***surrendering*** all to God.
(*2 Chronicles 34:27; Roman 12:1*)

*Fast Begins: 12:01 am
Wednesday, October 4, 2017*



*Fast Ends:
Sunday, November 12, 2017*