

ONE



21 Days of Prayer and Fasting

21 Days of Prayer

1. Align Yourself Before God

Become aware of your inner world.

Becoming aware of how you think, feel, and react to your life is central to your experience with God. The lens in which you view yourself often influences how you think God looks at you. To align yourself with awareness doesn't mean you feel a certain way; it just means you're perceptive of your thoughts and inner emotions.

Are you happy, fulfilled, energized, frustrated, empty, peaceful, hopeful, discouraged, angry, etc.? Are you dull of hearing, slow to respond to God, calloused to conviction, or oblivious to how you're perceived by those around you?

ONE Exercise:

During your morning prayer, find a quiet place, get in a comfortable position, close your eyes, and be still. Feel everything you can—your hands, your feet, your hair, your insides... Try to count the sounds you hear, like a clock, the furnace, a bird, the traffic, your breathing, etc.

When you're done with that, keep your eyes closed and ask yourself, how do I feel about myself? Combine all of the good and bad feelings and thoughts you have about yourself into one big list in your mind. We call this "mindfulness," being aware of what is going on in your mind and heart right at that moment.

Now journal how you feel about yourself and the adjustments you need to make in order to feel aligned with a healthy awareness of what is happening in your inner world.

"Examine yourselves to see if your faith is genuine. Test yourselves. Surely you know that Jesus Christ is among you; if not, you have failed the test of genuine faith." (2 Corinthians 13:5 NLT)

"Keep a close watch on how you live and on your teaching. Stay true to what is right for the sake of your own salvation and the salvation of those who hear you." (1 Timothy 4:16 NLT)

2. Align Yourself with Your Heavenly Father

Being at peace with God and finding acceptance and love from Him is the ultimate quest of every human being, whether they know it or not. Alignment with your heavenly Father starts by receiving His love and forgiveness. Some of us don't have father figures, but all of us have seen somewhere a father who truly displays unconditional love for his child. Today you have an opportunity to see yourself as a child who is loved by his heavenly Father just the way you are. If there's something you want to get off your chest, you can talk to Him now, and He will forgive and reaffirm His love for you.

ONE Exercise:

In your prayer time, close your eyes and imagine strong arms wrapped around you. Once you can feel them hold you, then hear Him say, "this is my beloved son/daughter in whom I'm well pleased." If there's anything you need to make right, do it now.

"One God and Father of all, who is over all, in all, and living through all." (Ephesians 4:6 NLT)

3. Align Yourself with Jesus

Jesus is the Savior. He saves our souls by forgiving our sins, and then as we follow His lead and example, we make adjustments with our intentions, actions, relationships, habits, and attitudes.

ONE Exercise:

Set a goal to read the entire book of John. Start today by reading the first chapter. John really describes Jesus and His attributes in a creative and unique way from the perspective of someone who really loved and was close to Jesus. As you read, highlight every attribute you would like to add into your life.

"Then Jesus said to His disciples, "If anyone wishes to come after Me, he must deny himself, and take up his cross and follow Me. For whoever wishes to save his life will lose it; but whoever loses his life for My sake will find it. For what will it profit a man if he gains the whole world and forfeits his soul?"

(Matthew 16:24 -26 NASB)

4. Align Yourself with the Holy Spirit

The Holy Spirit leads and guides us, and is the still, small voice that lives within us. During these days of concentrated prayer and fasting, listen to that inner voice. We also know the Holy Spirit shows us things to come. This voice of the Holy Spirit always comes in the form of promptings, encouragement, revelation, and wisdom. Over the centuries, Christians have practiced disciplines of chanting, periods of solitude, fasting, speaking in tongues, and contemplative prayer to silence every thought and noise other than the still, small voice of the Holy Spirit.

ONE Exercise:

Do a Google search for "how to hear the voice of the Holy Spirit." Read two or three of the articles you see on the first page, and look for repeated themes in the different articles. Journal any insights you discover. Disregard anything that seems off, and move toward what bears witness with you. Take time to practice one or more of the above disciplines.

"The Spirit of God, who raised Jesus from the dead, lives in you. And just as God raised Christ Jesus from the dead, he will give life to your mortal bodies by this same Spirit living within you." (Romans 8:11 NLT)

5. Align Yourself with God's Word

We hide the word in our hearts so we will not sin against God. (Psalms 119:11) Often we look for Scriptures for whatever situation we're in, which is great, but adding daily readings of Scripture and getting the big picture from the Word of God is important for our Christian world view.

ONE Exercise:

Continue with the book of John and add one chapter of Proverbs. Journal about one proverb that speaks to you. Consider reading a chapter of Proverbs that aligns with the date. (Example: Read Chapter 7 on the seventh day of the month.)

"All Scripture is inspired by God and is useful to teach us what is true and to make us realize what is wrong in our lives. It corrects us when we are wrong and teaches us to do what is right. God uses it to prepare and equip his people to do every good work." (2 Timothy 3:16-17 NLT)

6. Align Yourself with Your Family

Honoring parents, training children, and yielding to our spouse are all given as high priorities in Scripture. Being aligned means to be in agreement with—to be as one. Today's prayer focus includes praying for our immediate family members and asking the Holy Spirit to show us if any self-interest or habit would separate us from walking as one with any of our family members.

ONE Exercise:

Write out a prayer in your journal for each of your family members. Include a Scripture in each prayer. Then add this to your prayer routine for the rest of the twenty-one days.

"Children, obey your parents because you belong to the Lord, for this is the right thing to do. 'Honor your father and mother.' This is the first commandment with a promise: If you honor your father and mother, 'things will go well for you, and you will have a long life on the earth.' Fathers, do not provoke your children to anger by the way you treat them. Rather, bring them up with the discipline and instruction that comes from the Lord." (Ephesians 6:1-4 NLT)

7. Align Yourself Yourself with Your Church

Ephesians tells us that God places us in the body as He sees fit. Others may have been given the role to assess our gifts, resources, and strengths, and they may know how to place us in the right place, but it's up to us to offer ourselves up to our local church. Today we're going to examine ourselves as to our roles within the church. How are we using what God has given to us to add value to the local body of Christ? Is there anything that would keep you from being aligned with the vision, beliefs, culture, or programming currently at your church? What communication would have to take place in order for you to be aligned?

ONE Exercise:

On a scale of one to ten, how would you rate what you bring to the table at church? Pick one person with whom you could discuss your score. Before you meet with that person, make a list of your ideas, frustrations, questions, and concerns. When you meet by phone or in person, discuss where you feel there are limitations, and explore your desires during the conversation. They may perceive something you can't.

"We are many parts of one body, and we all belong to each other." (Romans 12:5 NLT)

8. Rethink Your Gifting

The word repent means to "rethink." Do you operate out of using your gifts and strengths? Or do you focus on assigned tasks or a felt need that you see but not necessarily within your gift mix? You lose energy when operating outside of the strengths God has placed within you. Your greatest source of energy will come when you are fulfilling a purpose while using your greatest strengths and abilities.

ONE Exercise:

Read 1 Corinthians 12 and journal a list of your strengths and passions. Are you using these gifts for the kingdom?

"A spiritual gift is given to each of us so we can help each other." (1 Corinthians 12:7 NLT)

9. Rethink Your Contribution

This is not about money or even your time, unless that's what you need to rethink. This is referring to your motivation for contributing or not contributing to the places in life where God has you placed currently. What are your motives when you give something of yourself in your home, neighborhood, church, or community? Do you want to be noticed? Are you hoping to gain influence or power? Is your contribution self-serving?

Maybe after evaluating your efforts, you realize your contributions are a little bit on the skimpy side—maybe even nonexistent. It's almost like people around you are working hard to contribute so you can enjoy your home, church, and neighborhood. Obviously, if either is the case, adjustments need to be made. If it's time to rethink your contribution, some time focused on this topic today in prayer might be helpful.

ONE Exercise:

Make a list of the spaces where you operate on a regular basis, like your home, work, or church. Next to each category, write down what you're contributing there. Pray over the list and see if anything needs to be adjusted, such as: your motives, under-valuing what you have to offer, being stingy with your resources, and whatever else comes to mind.

Now pray and listen to the voice of the Holy Spirit and write down any adjustments you think need to be made.

"You must each decide in your heart how much to give. And don't give reluctantly or in response to pressure. 'For God loves a person who gives cheerfully.'" (2 Corinthians 9:7 NLT)

10. Rethink Your Relationships

Relationships are foundational to our lives and our faith. Being intentional with the relationships you currently have will determine how meaningful those relationships will be in the future. It also determines whether or not those relationships will produce healthy fruit. Sometimes we enter into relationships that are toxic or are unequally yoked as the Scripture describes. When a relationship centers on control, abuse, or codependency, it sucks the life out of us and keeps us from experiencing peace and joy and a sense of well-being. Today, let's focus prayer time on relationships that need to be mended, others that need to be ended, and those that need our full attention.

ONE Exercise:

After you've spent time praying for those relationships, make a to-do list as the Holy Spirit reveals ways to be intentional and handle those relationships.

"Two people are better off than one, for they can help each other succeed. If one person falls, the other can reach out and help. But someone who falls alone is in real trouble." (Ecclesiastes 4:9 -10 NLT)

11. Rethink Your Potential

Everyone has God-given potential and lots of it. We're most limited when we give up accountability to circumstances, disabilities, and beliefs. The following phrases all limit one's potential: I would love to but, I'm too old; I'm too young; I'm too poor; I'm not educated; I'm not smart enough; I'm not cute enough; I don't know the Bible, I can't; I won't.

The Psalms say we are "fearfully and wonderfully made;" therefore, woven into our innermost being is wonderful potential. Let's pray today about discovery and breaking our limiting beliefs and thoughts.

ONE Exercise:

Make a list of limiting words you are in the habit of saying. Add beliefs about yourself that hold you back. Pray over this list, asking God to release the grip those things have on your life. Then take the list home and either shred it, burn it, or turn it into compost.

"Now all glory to God, who is able, through his mighty power at work within us, to accomplish infinitely more than we might ask or think." (Ephesians 3:20 NLT)

12. Rethink Your Thinking

Most people never think about what they think about. We all have patterns of thinking, and often times those patterns are destructive. Proverbs tells us that “as a man think it in his heart, so is he.” Therefore, how we think shapes us. There are two general roads to live by—the high road and the low road, positive and negative.

It’s easy to slip into thinking about the negative all the time. Deuteronomy 30 describes a it like this: I set before you life and death, blessing and cursing; therefore, CHOOSE life.

ONE Exercise:

Be honest. Do you gravitate toward worst case scenarios? Read Philippians 4:8–9, then rewrite it in your journal in first person. Change “think on things that are honest” to “I think on things that are honest.” Now read it daily until you have it memorized.

“Let God transform you into a new person by changing the way you think.” (Romans 12:2 NLT)

13. Rethink Your Future

We can get trapped both by failing to see the future and by getting caught up in thinking only about the future. A balance between awareness of what’s going on all around you today and visualizing a positive future is very important. When viewing the future, always look through eyes of hope, positive outcomes, and expectancy that God will guide your steps. See yourself responding to the most difficult setbacks and most exciting opportunities. Some people unfortunately picture their futures as replicas of their current disappointments. They believe nothing will ever get any better. Rethink your future with creative and positive thoughts.

ONE Exercise:

As you pray today, ask the Holy Spirit to give you a one-year and a five-year vision. Write them down in your journal and pray for His will to be done.

“‘For I know the plans I have for you,’ says the Lord. ‘They are plans for good and not for disaster, to give you a future and a hope.’” (Jeremiah 29:11 NLT)

14. Rethink Your Health

Part of a healthy future is making sure we are living a healthy lifestyle right now. During this prayer time, ask yourself, have I taken on the responsibility for my own health, or have I given that responsibility back to God? Giving things to God sounds noble, but some things are our responsibility. If you really think about it, sometimes we ask God to heal us or deliver us from things that have been caused by our own neglect. What if

God is trying to answer our prayers before we ever get sick, but by our own neglect, we interfere with that very prayer?

ONE Exercise:

As you pray today, ask God to give you courage to face the very area you don't want to address. Then, before you leave your prayer time, set a goal for what you want to change.

"Dear friend, I hope all is well with you and that you are as healthy in body as you are strong in spirit."
(3 John 1:2 NLT)

15. What About Your Role?

Everybody has roles they play in life—husband, mom, boss, employee, son, friend etc. Every role has expectations. Are you meeting them? If not, maybe this would be a good time to examine them through prayer. Sometimes we work too hard at meeting expectations, and other times we completely neglect our roles.

ONE Exercise:

In your journal, make a list of the roles you play in life. Now put a number one through ten that correlates with where you're at when it comes to fulfilling that role. (One meaning nonexistent, and ten meaning All-Star)

Now set three goals for those rated less than a seven in your journal.

"And whatever you do or say, do it as a representative of the Lord Jesus, giving thanks through him to God the Father." (Colossians 3:17 NLT)

16. What About Your Church?

When God plants us in a local church, our lives begin to flourish. But planting means you're rooted. Do you feel you're rooted in your church? Do you have friends there? Have you found a place to be involved? Have you reached out to those who are having difficulties? Do you trust those who lead?

ONE Exercise:

Pray for the pastors and leaders of your church. Listen to the Holy Spirit's promptings regarding being rooted. Journal your thoughts.

"Therefore, whenever we have the opportunity, we should do good to everyone—especially to those in the family of faith." (Galatians 6:10 NLT)

17. What About Charity?

Justice, compassion, mercy, and generosity are core understandings of Christianity. What pulls on your heartstrings? When was the last time you were prompted to respond to someone's need spontaneously? Have you sacrificed or gone without for someone else? Have you ever come to someone's defense? Charity means love. Let charity be a focus in your prayers today.

ONE Exercise:

Read through 1 Corinthians 13, the "love chapter." Read it first, then pray it into your spirit and ask the Lord to make those qualities foremost in your life. Then, this week listen to what the Holy Spirit prompts you to do when you see needs.

"If you help the poor, you are lending to the Lord—and he will repay you!" (Proverbs 19:17 NLT)

18. What About Your Home?

Your home is a display of your soul. If you don't like what you see there, ask yourself if something needs to change within. Look at your home as a canvas you get to paint. Environment shapes us, so allow the Holy Spirit to show you how to turn your home into an environment that gives you energy, makes others feel welcome, and allows for fellowship. If you like your home environment, ask yourself, *who could I host here and make a difference in their lives?*

ONE Exercise:

In your journal, list ten things in your home you enjoy. Then list ten things you feel need to be added, removed, or given attention. Now pray over these things and allow the Holy Spirit to show you how to use your home to benefit others.

"Anyone who does not take care of his family and those in his house has turned away from the faith. He is worse than a person who has never put his trust in Christ." (1 Timothy 5:8 NLT)

19. What About the Innocent?

Betrayal, sickness, the loss of loved ones, and other forms of devastating or disappointing experiences affect innocent people every day. What if this month of fasting and prayer lead you to lighten the burden of someone you know who is experiencing something difficult?

ONE Exercise:

In your prayer time, allow the Lord to reveal someone in your life who is carrying

a heavy load. Then decide how you will help lift that weight. The experience would be a good thing to journal about as well.

"Learn to do good. Seek justice. Help the oppressed. Defend the cause of orphans. Fight for the rights of widows." (Isaiah 1:17 NLT)

20. What About the "Alone"?

Shut-ins, misfits, socially awkward, depressed, wounded, and those not single by choice are often ignored by those who live healthy, happy, fulfilled lives. It's easy for people to fall into the habit of being alone, even to the point of pushing people away. Today as you pray aloud, ask the Holy Spirit to reveal someone you can reach out to so they will know someone has been thinking about them.

ONE Exercise:

Set up a coffee date, extend an invitation, or enjoy someone's presence for an extended period of time and learn their story.

"Then these righteous ones will reply, 'Lord, when did we ever see you hungry and feed you? Or thirsty and give you something to drink? Or a stranger and show you hospitality? Or naked and give you clothing? When did we ever see you sick or in prison and visit you?' And the King will say, 'I tell you the truth, when you did it to one of the least of these my brothers and sisters, you were doing it to me!'" (Matthew 25:37-40 NLT)

21. What About Praying for People?

How often do we tell people we'll pray for them? How refreshing would it be if more people stopped and prayed right then and there when somebody asked them to? We know the book of Mark says "believers lay hands on the sick and they recover." As believers, we have this authority within us to pray for people, but sometimes fear holds us back. Maybe now would be the right time to ask for courage.

ONE Exercise:

Today in prayer, make a decision that the next time someone asks you to pray for them, ask immediately if you can pray right then. It would be good to journal this experience.

"Confess your sins to each other and pray for each other so that you may be healed. The earnest prayer of a righteous person has great power and produces wonderful results." (James 5:16 NLT)