



Introduction

In January 2002, we launched into a new era of ministry at The Summit Church. As we began again, we committed ourselves to prayer, crying out to God for his blessing and favor. Twenty years later, we've seen what God does when his people pray, and we're greatly encouraged. We're no less needy today for the mighty power of God, but our faith has greatly increased as we've remembered who God is and what he's done. Our God longs to gain glory for himself through the church, and we still believe that he's able to do more than we can ask.

As we remember God's faithfulness and look to the future, let's be people who call out to God for his blessing and favor. He is the one who works in us "to will and to act in order to fulfill his good purpose" (Philippians 2:13). **And as we begin again, we're calling our Summit Church family to 20 days of prayer and fasting.** Together, we want to earnestly seek the face of God and surrender ourselves to his purposes and plans for his glory, knowing that he says, "Call to me and I will answer you and tell you great and unsearchable things you do not know" (Jeremiah 33:3).

We hope this week's guide helps you and your small group grow in the habit of praying together as you seek God's face through his Word.

Before Your Small Group Meeting

- Read Paul's prayer in Ephesians 3:14–21.
- Ask God to prepare your heart to pray together as a group.

Group Discussion and Prayer

This week, we want to spend the bulk of our small group time praying together. **We will alternate between discussion as a whole group and praying together in smaller groups.** You will briefly discuss the questions below which are based on the Scripture texts from the 20 Days of Fasting and Prayer Guide (summitchurch.com/prayer). The discussion will lead you to pray together in smaller groups. We recommend that groups split up into groups of three or four during the prayer times.

Remember that we want to maximize our time in corporate prayer, so please limit the discussion to a maximum of five minutes per question. The purpose of the discussion is to lead you to be deliberate and thoughtful in your prayer time. The hope is that as you consider God's Word together, you will be moved to go to him in prayer, trusting his promises to listen and answer you.

Discuss

1. Let's have a few of us share our personal plans and hopes for the 20 Days of Fasting and Prayer. Any tips we can share with each other? Anyone doing something like this for the first time?

2. Read 1 Thessalonians 5:23–24. What do we learn about God and what he is able to do for us in these verses? How do these truths prompt us to pray?

Now may the God of peace himself sanctify you completely. And may your whole spirit, soul, and body be kept sound and blameless at the coming of our Lord Jesus Christ. ²⁴ He who calls you is faithful; he will do it. (CSB)

Pray

Break up into smaller groups of three or four. Take some of the insights from 1 Thessalonians and pray together for seven minutes. Be sure to ask God to prepare your hearts for the coming of the Lord Jesus Christ. Leaders, if it's helpful, set a timer for when everyone will return to the big group.

Discuss

3. Read Ephesians 3:16–19. What is Paul asking God to do in this prayer, and why?

I pray that he may grant you, according to the riches of his glory, to be strengthened with power in your inner being through his Spirit, ¹⁷ and that Christ may dwell in your hearts through faith. I pray that you, being rooted and firmly established in love, ¹⁸ may be able to comprehend with all the saints what is the length and width, height and depth of God's love, ¹⁹ and to know Christ's love that surpasses knowledge, so that you may be filled with all the fullness of God.

Pray

Break up into smaller groups of three or four. Take seven minutes to pray and ask God to do the same things Paul is asking him to do. Ask him to fill The Summit Church with the fullness of God.

Discuss

4. Read 1 Peter 5:10–11. In these verses, consider what God is able to do for those who suffer.

The God of all grace, who called you to his eternal glory in Christ, will himself restore, establish, strengthen, and support you after you have suffered a little while. ¹¹ To him be dominion forever. Amen.

Pray

Break up into smaller groups of three or four. As you approach God in prayer, consider that he is the “*God of all grace*” (1 Peter 5:10). Take seven minutes to pray and ask God to restore, establish, strengthen, and support you through any trials you are going through, big or small.

Discuss

5. Does anyone want to share their plans for fasting? What excites you about fasting? What makes you apprehensive? How can we help each other as we fast?

Pray

Break up into smaller groups of three or four. As we close this time, take seven minutes to pray about fasting. Pour out your heart to God. Tell him what excites you and what you want him to do through this time of fasting. If you're apprehensive, ask God for help!

A Closing Encouragement

Why do we fast? Fasting is a way to deepen our hunger for God and to grow in holiness. It's been said that “more than any other discipline, fasting reveals the things that control us.”¹ And so it confronts us with our need to surrender to God. It's not a way to manipulate God or coerce him to hear and answer our prayers, but rather it acknowledges our complete dependence on him. It humbles us and awakens us to our great need for and reliance on God.

¹ Richard J. Foster, *Celebration of Discipline: The Path to Spiritual Growth*, 3rd ed. (San Francisco: HarperSanFrancisco, 1998), 55.

As you consider fasting, we encourage you to listen to the Holy Spirit. Ask God to lead you in this time of seeking his face. Whether you choose to fast for one day, several days, or the entire 20 days, the point is to humble yourself in a new way and draw near to God.

Here are some ideas of ways you could fast.

- **A selective fast, eliminating certain things from your diet.** For example, eating only fruits and vegetables, what some might call a “Daniel fast.”
- **A partial fast, refraining from eating for a set period of time each day.** For example, fasting from a single meal or from sunup to sundown.
- **A complete fast, refraining from eating and only drinking liquids** for particular days or an extended period of time.
- **If fasting from food is not possible, you may feel led by the Lord to fast from something else,** such as social media, television, or certain times or activities on your cell phone.

If you'd like to learn more about fasting, here are a few resources:

- Article | Seven Basic Steps to Successful Fasting and Prayer²
- Article | Six Ingredients That Will Help You Fast From Technology³
- Sermons | These sermons by John Mark Comer might be helpful in your understanding and practice of fasting and prayer.⁴

² <https://www.cru.org/us/en/train-and-grow/spiritual-growth/fasting/7-steps-to-fasting.html>

³ <https://www.cru.org/us/en/train-and-grow/spiritual-growth/fasting/6-ingredients-that-will-help-you-fast-from-technology.html>

⁴ <https://practictheway.org/practices/fasting>