

A Verse to Live by

“Rejoice always, pray continually, give thanks in all circumstances; for this is God’s will for you in Christ Jesus. Do not quench the Spirit.”

1 Thessalonians 5:16-19 (NIV)

November Prayer Focus

This month pray for our nation and future president. Pray for God’s will to be done in America and that we experience a revival in our nation and world. We need to become bold as lions, gentle as lambs; in this volatile world that is impossible without God. Also pray for a breakthrough in your personal life. This could be financial, spiritual, physical or relational.

Life Application Challenge

This month I challenge each of you to fast for a day. Fast and pray to your Heavenly Father for the breakthrough you need. Or fast to get closer to God and know Him more. We can pray without fasting and God still hears and answers those prayers, but there is not one instance in the Bible of fasting without praying. Fasting and prayer should always be done together. Let’s take our prayer lives up a notch and not quench the Spirit! It is time to experience some comebacks instead of just setbacks! This will cause your faith to grow and you will trust God even more.

Recommended Scripture Reading

2 Chronicles 20 - A great Bible story of how fasting and prayer can lead to miracles and divine intervention in your battles. Matthew 4 - A chapter with instruction on living a holy reverent life and about Jesus’ ministry. Psalm 37 - I quoted verse 4 of this chapter. This chapter explains the kind of life you should lead so God “will give you the desires of your heart.” This is a conditional promise.

Church On Fire!

Eleventh Street Church of God | November 2020 Prayer Newsletter

A FAST BEFORE THE FEAST

Fasting....one of the more unpleasant words in the Christian life. I know some of you might be thinking "A newsletter in November about fasting? November is for feasting not fasting." But what better month to focus on our Heavenly Father than the month we focus on being thankful for His provision. Fasting can be an incredible spiritual experience with exciting personal rewards. There is great news about fasting! It results in much more blessing than sacrifice, "Delight yourself in the LORD, and he will give you the desires of your heart." (Ps. 37:4) If you feel uneasy about fasting it is likely that you do not fully understand its purpose and benefits. I hope by the end of this letter, you see fasting as a way to get closer to your Abba Father, and see breakthroughs in your life.

For some, just the mere mention of fasting conjures up dread, leading them to start thinking of reasons they "can't" participate. I mean let's face it, we church people love to feast. We have potlucks, spaghetti dinner fundraisers, candy sales and the most pious women have candy in their purses to share with their families. Others may try to find "valid" reasons not to participate in fasting. We tell ourselves it really is not that important. We may even be tempted to fast from things we want to shirk off anyway. My youngest son, Jacob, announced one year for Lent he chose to fast from school work to focus on God. It is now quite a funny memory to us. But, just as we did not buy into Jacob's "sacrifice" of all school work as a wise and honorable choice, God also knows if our intentions are righteous.

There is no direct command in the Bible to fast, but Jesus did fast and we are to be Christ-like, "Therefore be imitators of God, as beloved children." (Eph. 5:1) There are also instructions on how to fast (Mtt. 6:16-18), so the assumption is Christians will. The prophet Joel mentions God instructing the people of Judah to fast for repentance, "'Yet even now,' declares the Lord, 'return to me with all your heart, with fasting, with weeping, and with mourning;'" (Joel 2:12) And there are many accounts in the Bible of miracles happening when God's people fasted. If you have never fasted before you are missing out on an amazing spiritual experience.

What is so significant about fasting? I have heard it said that fasting shows God how serious you are about what you are asking for. While I do agree with that; I think there is more to it. Fasting lets Him know that you are willing to give up things you need or want to focus on and hear from Him; that He Himself and His guidance are that important to you.

You can fast from just one meal, or from other things such as social media, tv, etc. But why do we even fast? The point of fasting is to set aside the time we normally give to something and spend that time with God. It is a focused, purposeful, intentional prayer conversation between you and God. It is not to prove your Christianity to others; don't concern yourself with what others think. Jesus warns us about fasting for the attention or approval of others, "When you fast, do not look somber as the hypocrites do, for they disfigure their faces to show others they are fasting. Truly I tell you, they have received their reward in full." (Mtt. 6:16) And that reward of admiration from others does not come close to God's rewards!

There are times when only God can help or deliver us from certain circumstances; that is when we need to take our prayer life to the next level...and fasting does just that! Jehoshaphat did this very thing in 2 Chronicles 20. Three armies joined forces to wage war against him. When he was told of this he was terrified, but his next few choices not only ensured Judah's victory but they got to witness the awesome power of God! "Then Jehoshaphat was afraid and set his face to seek the LORD, and proclaimed a fast throughout all Judah." (vs. 3) God was touched by their cries, their fasting, and rewarded them in a big way, "Listen, all Judah and inhabitants of Jerusalem and King Jehoshaphat: Thus says the LORD to you, 'Do not be afraid and do not be dismayed at this great horde, for the battle is not yours but God's.'" (vs. 15) After receiving God's words, Jehoshaphat and all of Judah bowed to God praising and thanking Him. They thanked him **before** the victory. God's word was proof enough for them. They trusted Him so much that they had a choir go before the army singing thanks to God for the victory they were about to have. And when they got to the valley where the other armies were assembled - they found all of them dead. They never had to raise a single sword. God had turned their enemies against each other! The last verse of this chapter says it all: "So the realm of Jehoshaphat was quiet, for his God gave him rest all around." (vs. 30) Seeking God always leads to peace in our hearts and victory in our battles.

When we take time to focus solely on God we become closer to Him. And being the loving Abba Father He is; He never fails to notice your time of fasting or to reward it. "so that it will not be obvious to others that you are fasting, but only to your Father, who is unseen; and your Father, who sees what is done in secret, will reward you." (Mtt. 6:18) Those rewards are oftentimes miraculous, life altering and "immeasurably more than all we ask or imagine". (Eph. 3:20)

Watching God Work,

Carolyn Abel