

Pray With Us

a call to prayer and fasting



PRAYER AND FASTING FOR MAY

Welcome to May – well, at least, the May Prayer and Fasting newsletter.

I've been wondering if anyone has managed to have a time of fasting attached to your prayer time yet?

Prayer includes many feelings

If this is a new aspect to your prayer life it may have felt awkward, strange or even tough. On the other hand you may have felt God's presence, it seemed natural and uplifting. These experiences and many feelings in between them are all part of prayer.

We have had times where we are not feeling God's Holy Spirit near us, mixed with other occasions when we are having new thoughts of how we can grow in Jesus and be used by him, to different instances when know he is encouraging and caring for us. I have found that all these experiences help me grow in my faith and understanding.

Adding fasting, however, usually helps us bring more focus to our praying.

Fasting from Social Media

Say we are fasting from social media for the day – this means we turn off notifications and we move the social media apps from the front of our devices to one of the back pages. Taking them from our immediate sight can help reduce the temptation to just have a 'quick' peek.

When we do this we immediately give ourselves extra time to spend in prayer and maybe fasting with God the Father, Son and Holy Spirit.

Group or Corporate Prayer and Fasting



When Sharon and Scott spoke with Simone and me about writing this newsletter they said that they had a strong feeling God was calling all of us at NBC to prayer and fasting during this year.

Corporate calls to fast are usually concerned with situations or issues beyond our personal circumstances – it is something that impacts a large area or group.

In his book *fasting for Spiritual Breakthrough* Elmer Towns says that a group problem requires the group to pray and fast for the solution. Makes sense to me.

Now, rest assured, Scott and Sharon didn't say there was a problem causing them to ask for NBC group prayer and fasting. In fact, it was the opposite!

Spiritual Breakthrough Opportunities and Ezra Fast

They feel that 2026 is a pivotal year for NBC and there is an opportunity for large spiritual breakthrough which requires as many of us as possible to delve deeply into prayer and fasting. So, this is a wonderful reason for us to each be joining in on this positive prayer season.

Towns calls this group fast an Ezra Fast. It is a deep prayer and fast time with the aim of finding the spiritual nature of the situation we are going to be praying about.

I encourage you to be asking God some questions as we fast and pray before we try to brainstorm solutions of our own. Maybe questions such as these (but God could prompt different questions for you):

- Dear Jesus what are the spiritual breakthroughs you want to happen at NBC?
- Where do we physically need to pray for them to happen?
- What needs to happen in each of us so we can be part of the spiritual breakthrough?
- How can we help each other's prayers by sharing information we learn from our prayer times?
- Where do we need to pray? Ezra brought the people together by a riverbank to fast and pray before they headed off on their journey.
- Do we need to prayer walk our communities?

In Ezra 8 it says ²¹ There, by the Ahava Canal, I proclaimed a fast, so that we might humble ourselves before our God and ask him for a safe journey for us and our children, with all our possessions. ²² I was ashamed to ask the king for soldiers and horsemen to protect us from enemies on the road, because we had told the king, "The gracious hand of our God is on everyone who looks to him, but his great anger is against all who forsake him." ²³ So we fasted and petitioned our God about this, and he answered our prayer. (NIV)

Seeking the Holy Spirit's Help First

This large group of Israelites were returning home after being in exile for a long time and they needed everyone to see that God was with them. Combined praying asking God for solutions is not us attempting to make our situation all God's issue. No – instead, this is doing the wisest thing first – which is seeking the Holy Spirit's help in tackling the situation.

In this instance the Israelites were wise and once they had prayed and fasted they put faith into action by starting their journey.

Personally I have found that my experience with God has shown me that, after an intense prayer period, I also need to act.

Sometimes I haven't had a clear answer to my questions, so my extra prayer has been for God to open the doors/ways he wants me to go and to close the ones he doesn't want me to take.

On other occasions there has been a clear direction so I head in that way.



Faith and Works

Throughout the Bible there is a strong stream of faith and works teaching which reveals we need both aspects in our life with Christ.

Whatever comes out of our praying and fasting there still comes a time when we need to do something. This 'something' could involve hard work, planning, determination, using our intelligence, details, big picture imaging and stepping out in faith.

We might want Jesus to be hugely introduced to our communities, families, friends, workmates, acquaintances so right now we choose to make the month of May when we will dive more deeply, than we ever have before, into prayer and fasting.

Bible Passages For Focus

Currently our Sunday themes are centred on Humbly Walking Through Ephesians and this continues until 24 May. Please make Ephesians a key Scripture for May as well checking out Ezra 8.

Extra Suggested Prayer Points

- When reading through Ephesians ask God to reveal who we are in Christ
- A question or two about how we live out the Gospel (Good News) of Jesus in our daily living also could be helpful.
- In many ways Ephesians is about God bringing our fractured/damaged lives and world together – healing, restoring – and it comes through our renewed and strengthened faith in God being strongly knitted together with our everyday behaviour. “Dear God, what in me needs repairing? Please do your work, then I will be able to do mine with increased passion, desire, enthusiasm, diligence and effectiveness. You are my strength, energy and powerpack please reconcile me so closely with you that I keep growing: in my faith, understanding and wisdom in my daily actions.”
- May Pentecost (24 May) bring an exhilarating Holy Spirit wind of inspiration through NBC.
- We want our children and youth ministries to thrive during this year.
- And Lord, our Red Shield Appeal provides funds for us to bring practical, emotional and spiritual life-changing, uplifting assistance to many in our community who have trauma affected lives. It would be fabulous for us to raise even more money this year than we ever have before.

Don't Forget this Website for advice on Fasting as a Spiritual Discipline

<https://www.focusonthefamily.com/live-it-post/fasting-as-a-spiritual-discipline/>



The bread of life

Feed on Jesus, the bread of life. Skip the radio or TV for a day and become aware of how fidgety you are when you aren't being amused or diverted. Then dodge the remote, and embrace Jesus and his words: “my food... is to do the will of him who sent me” (John 4:34). Taste the difference between what truly nourishes the soul—the living bread and the life-giving water—and what is simply junk food.

Caring about “soul” things

Fasting reminds us that we care about “soul” things. We care about the church. We care about the world. About doing God's will. Thus we willingly set aside a little comfort so we can listen and attend to the voice and nourishment of God alone. For God can give us grace and comfort and nurture we cannot get on our own.

Guidelines for fasting from food



- Don't fast when you are sick, traveling, pregnant or nursing. People with diabetes, gout, liver disease, kidney disease, ulcers, hypoglycemia, cancer and blood diseases should not fast from food.
- Don't fast if you are in a hurry and are fasting for immediate results regarding some decision. Fasting is not magic.
- Listen for a nudging from God to fast.
- Stay hydrated. Always drink plenty of water and fluids.
- If you are new to fasting, begin by fasting for one meal. Spend the time with God that you would normally be eating.
- Work up to longer fasts. Don't attempt prolonged fasts without guidance. Check with your doctor before attempting long periods of fasting.
- If you decide to fast regularly, give your body time to adjust to new rhythms of eating. You may feel more tired on days you fast. Adjust responsibilities appropriately. (Expect your tongue to feel coated, and expect to have bad breath.)
- Begin a fast after supper. Fast until supper the next day. This way you miss two, rather than three, meals.
- Don't break your fast with a huge meal. Eat small portions of food. The longer the fast, the more you need to break the fast gently.

Thanks for sticking with me on this longer newsletter this month.

Joyfully serving Jesus

Laurie Robertson