



PRAYER & FASTING GUIDE

Wednesday, January 6th

Today's prayer guide was written by Caity Shinnick, our Creative & Communications Director.

LOOKING BACK

"Let us throw off everything that hinders and the sin that so easily entangles..." Hebrews 12:1

TAKE STOCK

If your year was anything like mine, then 2020 was a year full of forced change, plenty of pivots, unexpected silver linings, and a whole lot of unknowns. Think of 2020 like a storm that moved in. Just like a storm causing damage, the past year wreaked havoc in some areas of our lives — through political divides, a pandemic, injustice and chaos, and loneliness and separation. But a storm also brings rain, removes pollution from the air, and cools the earth; in the slowness and change of 2020, you may have found some unexpected joys and positive change. And now the storm of 2020 has passed (even if all these things aren't fully resolved). Here, in a moment of clearing as a new year begins, pause and take stock. See what actually is. Take a moment to assess the damage or decline, as well as the areas of growth and positivity from the year behind us.

For me, there were lots of moments of loneliness, stress, and worry. I found myself resorting to escapist behaviors, watching too much tv, and getting angry quicker than usual. But I also found joy in taking communion weekly at home with my kids, learning to worship on my own at home, and finding God in the day to day moments. I rediscovered creative hobbies I'd laid aside. Our family spent more time together than ever before.

LET GO

As you take stock of the year behind you, I encourage you to pause and ask the Lord what he wants you to release.

There may be sinful moments or patterns you stepped into; if this is the case, simply confess them to a Loving Father and ask him for strength, grace, and forgiveness. 1 John 1:9 says, "If we confess our sins, He is faithful and just to forgive us our sins and to cleanse us from all unrighteousness."

There may be habits that you need to kick so you can open up time for growth; take a moment to jot those habits down so that you can make a plan for change!

You may carry guilt or shame for any number of reasons. Because you have been cleansed, you no longer have to carry that guilt for the sins you committed. Romans 8:1 says, "There is therefore now no condemnation to those who are in Christ Jesus, who do not walk according to the flesh, but according to the Spirit." Shame has usually stuck because of something we believe about our own identity — ask the Lord to search your heart and highlight the thing that's causing shame. Maybe you believe you aren't loved, you aren't good enough, you aren't worthy. God has an answer of truth to whatever false belief you carry. Hold that false belief out to him, let him take it, and then ask him to give you his truth. Wait and listen for him to speak! If you feel like you can't hear him, ask a friend to pray with you and listen on your behalf!

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No matter what you need to let go of, know that **in Jesus** you are a new creation, old things have passed away, and you have become new (2 Corinthians 5:17).

LOOKING AHEAD

START WITH REST

Sometimes it's our tendency to hit the ground running, especially during this time of year when we typically make resolutions and big plans for change. All of the sudden we think we should be better, work harder, etc. Just like 2020 held a whole lot of unknowns, we step into a new year without knowing much of what's to come. (Isn't that how every year actually is?!) So instead of starting in a place of how you can be better, start in a place of rest.

Psalms 91:1–2 reads, "Whoever dwells in the shelter of the Most High will rest in the shadow of the Almighty. I will say of the Lord, 'He is my refuge and my fortress, my God, in whom I trust.'" Move from the place of letting go of sin, false beliefs, and old habits right into the safety and presence of God. Wait for the Lord, put all your hope in his word (Psalm 130:5). In his presence, there is fullness of joy (Psalm 16:11).

As you have let go of habits that took up your time, find rest in God's presence by reading scripture, worship, and prayer. Sometimes our human nature turns this into a duty we begrudgingly carry out; yet, if we are after the heart of God and knowing him more, what better place to start than in his presence?

LEAN IN

As you rest with God, let him be the one to set you on a path of growth. Spend time asking him where he wants to develop you.

If you sense that this year you want to grow in your love for scripture, ask God to give you a hunger for his word and make a plan for how you will spend more time reading the Bible! Read and pray through Psalm 119 — the writer dedicates the entire chapter to the subject of God's word and cries out that it would be his heart's desire, that he would walk according to it, and that his life would revolve around it!

If you sense that you want to grow in prayer, ask God to give you a desire to commune with him daily and make a plan for how you will spend more time praying. Jeremiah 29:12 says, "You will call on me and come and pray to me, and I will listen to you." What a beautiful promise — that we will call on God and he will listen to us!

Wherever you sense God calling you, ask him to help you lean in and make plans. And then go for it. Don't let yourself be discouraged if it's challenging at first. It's worth it.

PRAYER POINTS

- Father God, what do you want me to let go of? (sin, habits, false beliefs)
- Father God, will you draw me into your presence and show me what it's like to rest in you?
- Father God, where are you calling me to lean in and grow this year? Will you give me the desire and teach me to grow in this area?

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- For more resources and ideas of how to engage in this season, visit ethoschurch.org/connect.
 - For scripture reading plans, visit ethoschurch.org/readingplans.
 - For ways to how to grow in prayer with Ethos, join us for Sunday Prayer Gathering (ethoschurch.org/pg) or sign up for Freedom Prayer (ethoschurch.org/freedomprayer).