



PRAYER & FASTING GUIDE

Wednesday, July 7th

Today's prayer guide was written by Brandon Steele, one of our pastors here at Ethos.

What is possible with prayer?

Matthew 17:14-21 & Mark 9:14-29

Think about a time when you prayed for something and GOD answered exactly as you asked. Don't rush past that first sentence. If nothing has come to you yet, stay there until you remember a time.

My mind went to the summer after my senior year of high school. I remember sitting in the backyard one night in the swing that I grew up swinging in and jumping out of so many times. That night I was looking up into the sky at the moon and stars and I remember praying for GOD to come through. I felt called to ministry, and I knew I needed to be trained. I had a Christian college picked out and I was excited about the future. But I didn't know how I would pay for school. I didn't know how things would work out. But I knew that I really believed in the LORD and that night I prayed in faith, "LORD, take care of me. Will you provide for me and come through for me?"

Years later, I remember specific moments where I realized that He had answered that prayer I prayed. He had provided. He had come through. It didn't come how I expected, but He answered nonetheless. That realization was humbling, confidence building and made me overflow with gratitude. It made me want to worship him and bring to him more problems that didn't have solutions. He showed me that He was capable of doing things beyond my capability or understanding. You would think that after GOD moved in such a real and tangible way in my life, my faith and my confidence would never waver. But we all know that isn't how life works.

In Matthew 17 and Mark 9, the same story was told, but from two different people. A boy was being tormented by an evil spirit and he had been for a while. It kept trying to kill him, kept leading him into fire and water in hopes that he would commit suicide. The father brought his son to nine of Jesus' disciples because Jesus and the other three were away for the night. Unfortunately and surprisingly to them, they weren't able to heal the boy, they weren't able to help. Even though they had been empowered by Jesus to "drive out impure spirits and to heal every disease and sickness (Matthew 10:1)," and had experienced great success in the past, this encounter was different. What they knew to do wasn't working this time. They couldn't cure the little boy. Luckily for them, Jesus showed up, healed the boy and later that night answered the disciples' question, "Why couldn't we drive it out?" Jesus' answer, if I were guessing, probably wasn't the one they were hoping for. "Because you have so little faith."

Jesus was showing his disciples that although they had experienced success in the past with driving out demons, there was something they still needed to learn. Had their faith been re-directed onto themselves and their abilities? Had they forgotten what GOD had done in their past and grown faithless? We're not sure exactly. What we do know is Jesus wanted them to understand the necessity and power of belief, specifically in Jesus' ability and authority to restore. The story ends in Mark's account by Jesus saying, "This kind can only come out by prayer and fasting."



Did you catch that? There is a type of work of the enemy in people's lives that can only come out and be changed by prayer and fasting. Complete dependence and reliance on GOD and He can do things we cannot. We do all kinds of things to help people who are in need of a touch from Jesus. We tell them about Jesus, we serve them, we try to imitate Jesus and love them like He does. All these things are useful and good. But what about when none of that seems to be working? The answer isn't to stop doing those things because they are seemingly ineffective. GOD sees your desire and will honor your faithfulness and good works. The wisdom for us is to lean into prayer and fasting, to learn through experience that GOD does something in prayer and fasting that won't be accomplished otherwise.

Today, as we set aside this day as a church family to seek the LORD, may your belief in Jesus' ability and authority increase and may you learn the necessity of leaning on Jesus for the seemingly impossible.

READ

- Matthew 17:14-21
- Mark 9:14-29

REFLECT

- Who are the people in your life that are in need of Jesus? It might be people who don't know Jesus or those who need to experience healing or those who like the boy in the story, are being tormented by evil. Take a journal or a piece of paper and write out the names of people you want to see have a healing encounter with Jesus.
- Pray for each person individually. Ask Jesus to heal, deliver, restore and open their eyes to His goodness, grace and realness.
- At the top of this guide, I asked you to think of a time when GOD answered a prayer you prayed. What did that do to your faith and prayer life when it happened?
- If there are any places you are struggling to believe that GOD can heal or save any of the people you listed above, ask Him why you are struggling to believe. Then, ask him to help you believe.

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For more resources and ideas of how to engage in this season, visit ethoschurch.org/connect.