

PRAYER & FASTING GUIDE

Wednesday, July 6th

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INTRODUCTION

For the next several months we're going to be looking at different stories in the scriptures where prayer and fasting are mentioned. The hope is that we gain a more thorough understanding of all the purposes of prayer and fasting, biblically speaking. I don't know about you, but it's easy for me to hone in on one particular reason to pray and fast, for example, friendship with the LORD — and to forget that prayer and fasting has other purposes as well. I want us to explore these so that we are equipped to leverage prayer and fasting, both communally and individually, for all that GOD intends.

PRAYER AND FASTING AS A REGULAR PART OF LIFE

Last month we looked at the story in Acts 13 and our primary takeaway was that **prayer and fasting are intended to be a regular part of our lives**. This month I want to look at the same story, but consider another key purpose of prayer and fasting that we discover: **the Holy Spirit provides direction and clarity for next steps**.

Here is what Acts 13 says:

Now in the church at Antioch there were prophets and teachers: Barnabas, Simeon called Niger, Lucius of Cyrene, Manaen (who had been brought up with Herod the tetrarch) and Saul. While they were worshiping the Lord and fasting, the Holy Spirit said, "Set apart for me Barnabas and Saul for the work to which I have called them." So after they had fasted and prayed, they placed their hands on them and sent them off. Acts 13:1-3

I remember many years ago getting an email from a good friend of mine that was unhappy in his job. In the email he said that he was going to set a day aside to fast and really seek the LORD about what he should do. He invited me and others to pray and fast alongside him, if we felt led to do so. I remember reading the email and being so inspired and encouraged by him. His instinct when things weren't going as he wanted wasn't to quit or make a decision on his own, but to ask the LORD what He wanted. And it wasn't just something to casually add to the routine prayers, this was a big decision that He needed clarity on, so he wanted to create space, without any distractions, to hear from GOD.

Think about how many big decisions people in our church family are having to discern right now. *Should I move home to care for my aging parents even though my community is here? Do I need to accept that job? Do I need to ask that girl on a date? Should I marry him? Do I need to move to a different part of town? Should we have another kid? Where do I need to go to school?*

While the story in Acts 13 doesn't start with the disciples seeking an answer for their next steps, what they discovered is that the Holy Spirit worked through prayer and fasting to bring about clarity for what was next for them.

I want to encourage us to take this first Wednesday and seek the LORD for what is next. If you have decisions to make individually, ask the LORD and give him lots of time to speak. In addition to seeking the LORD for what you need individually, I want to invite you to ask the LORD for what He has next for us communally, as a church family. Our Elders & Direction Team are in a season of asking the LORD for the right next steps for us to take communally and I'd love for you to spend some time praying, listening and sharing what you hear. Pay attention to any passages of scripture or images that come to mind. We believe the LORD wants to speak to us and we want to listen to what He has to say. Please share with us by scanning the QR code below or going to the following url: **ethoschurch.org/firstwed**

My friend who sent me the email many years ago fasted and prayed that day and afterwards felt he needed to stay where He was, even though he was currently unhappy. What has been incredible is seeing the joy in my friend, who is still in the same job — yet many years later, he finds himself enjoying his work and doing well in it.

The LORD might give you a quick answer as you seek him today or he might choose to develop some perseverance in your prayer life. He might reveal to you the answer you were hoping for or he might have other plans for you that require sacrifice, trust, engaging in something new. Regardless of what GOD chooses to do or not do in our day of fasting this month, find joy knowing that you are learning to let go of the control over your life and you're letting Jesus be LORD. Ultimately He knows and wants what is best.

Share what you heard as you prayed for Ethos Church:

