



21 DAYS OF PRAYER

PRAYER GUIDE

JANUARY 2024

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This booklet belongs to:

WELCOME TO 21 DAYS OF PRAYER

This is our sixth consecutive year of 21 Days of Prayer at CLM. As always, we are excited and expectant! This focused time of prayer with fasting at the start of the year is always amazingly precious and highly impactful.

We will begin on **Monday 8 January, and run through until Sunday 28 January.**

Above all, we are coming after God! We are prioritising His Presence. We are seeking His face. We are pursuing His will. When we pray and fast, it changes us and deepens our connection with God. Also, as we do this together, our hearts are joined with one another and there is tremendous power in our united prayer.

21 Days of Prayer, in January, affirms a principle we seek to hold to at CLM, at all times – to **'Pray First'!** Prayer is not a last resort but our first thought.

This year we are excited to be focusing on the **Gospel of John** over the three weeks. We are encouraging everyone to read through John during this period, one chapter for each day. In this little booklet you will see

that we have included a 'focus verse' for each day, along with a simple devotional thought and a 'starter for prayer'.

Also, we are encouraging **'Prayer Triplets'** again. We are inviting everyone at CLM to join with two other people for the 21 Days – to connect for prayer, support and encouragement.

Please read on for other details; some ideas on how best to approach this time; and for some information about fasting, which may be especially useful if fasting is new to you.

Also, be sure to pick up a copy of **CLM's 'Prayer Shield'** for 2024 – a separate prayer guide for the year ahead and something we will also use during the three weeks.

Let's enter in...

Martin and Esther



ABOUT 21 DAYS OF PRAYER

21 Days of Prayer at CLM is, above all, an invitation to you personally to set aside some time to seek God in a focused way; creating space and introducing some disciplines into your routine to draw near to God at the start of the year. Besides drawing near, there may also be specific things you want to pray into during this period, as you believe for a breakthrough.

We are encouraging everyone to be part of the following:

PRAYER TRIPLETS

This year we are once again encouraging everyone at CLM to form a 'triplet' for 21 Days.

This simply means agreeing with two other people, to be in regular contact (ideally daily) for encouragement (maybe by text/ WhatsApp etc) and to find some times to pray together – whether in person, via Zoom, WhatsApp video or some other means, even if just for a few minutes.

If you need to add others in, and a 'three' becomes a 'four' or even a 'five', it's no problem!

STEPS

- 1. Approach** a couple of people who you could 'journey with' through 21 Days and ask them to be in your triplet.
- 2. Set up** a WhatsApp group or find another way to stay connected.
- 3. Agree** together how and when you can pray as a small group during the 21 Days.
- 4. Register** your triplet at www.clmchurch.co.uk/21days
- 5. Encourage** one another with Bible verses; worship songs; and by agreeing in prayer for specific matters.

PRAYER MEETINGS

We will be meeting to pray together at the following times during the 21 Days:

Sundays

CENTRAL: 8:30-8:45am
NORTH: 9:45-10:00am

Monday lunchtimes*

12:30-1:30pm

Tuesday evenings*

7:30-9:00pm

Wednesday lunchtimes*

12:30-1:30pm

Thursday evenings*

7:30-9:00pm

*Lunchtime and evening prayer meetings will take place at CLM Central – Parkside CV1 2HG.

Please see the CLM website for Parking information, as it may vary.

GROUPS

If you are part of a Life Group, Student Connect, CLM Youth or Synergy at CLM, we encourage you to prioritise meeting together and being connected with your group during this special time of prayer. Some groups will join with evening prayer meetings, and others will meet together as usual. Please check in with your group leader to find out what's happening.

Communicating with other members of your Group throughout the 21 Days will be really encouraging. You can cheer each other on, share what God is doing in you and saying to you, and you can pray for one another.

FURTHER INFORMATION

For any other information about 21 Days of Prayer, please visit www.clmchurch.co.uk/21days

HOW TO APPROACH 21 DAYS OF PRAYER

1. PREPARE WELL

Good preparation will give you a great chance of maximising this period of prayer. We encourage you to consider in advance of 21 Days of Prayer:

- **Your times alone with God**

What space can you create in your diary? Can you schedule these times in advance? How might you maximise these times? Consider where you might pray and study the Bible. Do you have a favourite place in your home? If your phone is a distraction, where will you put it while you pray, so you can focus?

- **What and when to fast**

Prayer and fasting is a powerful, biblical spiritual discipline which can deeply impact you as you set aside these weeks to seek God. For this reason, we are recommending that everyone undertakes some sort of fasting as a part of their participation in the 21 Days of Prayer. Planning this in advance will really help, including what kind of fast to undertake, and what entertainment or other

distractions to eliminate. See *the section on fasting for more detail and ideas.*

- **What to read / study / listen to**

We recommend you think, in advance, how you will use your time profitably. As a church we will be tracking through John's Gospel in 21 Days of Prayer. We would love you to join in! If you currently have a Bible reading plan, please keep going with that, but add in one chapter of John each day. Please also consider if there are other books/resources that could inspire you and take you deeper during this time. Could you create a worship playlist for the 21 Days? Why not talk to others to see what has helped and inspired them?

- **Getting a journal?**

Journaling may not be part of your usual pattern, but is there a way you can capture what you sense God saying to you during this time? It may be worth investing in a notebook to record your thoughts, prayers and Bible study notes.

- **Deciding areas for prayer focus**

Are there specific things you are going to consistently pray into during this time? Why not make a prayer plan in advance?

2. EXPECT TO ENJOY GOD

Simply increasing your intensity will probably not be fruitful.

Remember when Jesus gave a pattern for prayer, He began with 'Our Father ...'. We come first as sons and daughters into His love. Position yourself to enjoy God's Presence during this time. Make space for worship, to be still, to 'wait on the Lord', and to listen. Prayer is communicating with God and communication is two-way. Quietening your heart will help you hear God's voice.

3. BE READY TO ADJUST

You might make an initial plan of how to use the 21 Days, but along the way find that something isn't working for you, or something is working particularly well. Don't be a slave to your own plan. Be ready to adjust as you go and learn how to make the time fruitful for you.



DEVOTIONS IN JOHN'S GOSPEL

During these 21 Days of Prayer we are encouraging everyone to journey through John's Gospel, one chapter each day. We invite you to pray, asking the Holy Spirit to speak to you as you read the chapter, bringing it to life!

In this section there is a suggested 'focus verse' from the day's chapter, a simple devotional thought and a starter for prayer. Some of the 'Prayer Starters' are positioned corporately (Lord, help us...) and others personally ('Lord, help me...'). Either way, we invite you to make the prayers both personal and also 'corporate' – asking God to change us individually and together as a community...

John 1 Focus Verse

John 1:12

Yet to all who did receive him, to those who believed in his name, he gave the right to become children of God.

Devotional Thought

John opens his Gospel account declaring that Jesus, the Eternal Word, became flesh. And he quickly helps us to see that His coming opens the door for us to become God's children! As we begin the 21 days, let us come with thanks and praise - that by simply believing in and receiving Jesus, we have been made children of God. We are now sons and daughters with a new identity in Christ Jesus!

Prayer Starter

We thank you Lord Jesus that you were rejected so that we could be received.

We pray that during this 21-day period we will have a fresh revelation of our identity as children of God. We pray this will be demonstrated in peace, security, rest, confidence, expectation and increased likeness to Your glorious self! Amen.



TUESDAY
9 JANUARY

John 2

Focus Verse

John 2:5

His mother said to the servants, "Do whatever he tells you."

Devotional Thought

Jesus' first recorded miracle in John's Gospel, is turning water into wine at the wedding in Cana. The miracle unfolds as Mary, Jesus' mother instructs those around Him to do what He tells them to do. 2000 years and countless miracles later, we are wise to follow the instruction and to position ourselves to 'do whatever He tells us to do.'

Prayer Starter

We thank you Jesus that you involve us and include us in the miracles that you are doing in the earth. We pray that during this time of fasting, we will become more sensitive to hear what you are saying to us, and more yielded in our position, so we are ready for obedience – to do whatever you tell us to do. The answer is yes! Now what is your instruction, Jesus?

We look to you and ask for your guidance. Amen.

WEDNESDAY
10 JANUARY

John 3

Focus Verse

John 3:30

He must become greater; I must become less.

Devotional Thought

John the Baptist was the sensation of the day, for those who were looking for more of God. But his role was to make a way for Jesus and then to get out of the way, so that Jesus would be seen. Those who followed John the Baptist found this hard to take. John uttered these words which show the way for every follower of Jesus: 'He must become greater; I must become less.'

Prayer Starter

I thank you and praise you Jesus for your surpassing greatness! I pray that in this time of fasting, I will make room for more of your working in my life. As I humble myself and I look for you to become greater in me, and for 'self' to become less, may I not seek honour for myself, but rather desire my life to bring glory to you. Amen.



THURSDAY
11 JANUARY

John 4

Focus Verse

John 4:14

but whoever drinks the water I give them will never thirst. Indeed, the water I give them will become in them a spring of water welling up to eternal life.

Devotional Thought

Jesus met the ostracised, Samaritan woman at the well. Her life was a bit of a mess. Things had not worked out and many judged her for it. She was empty and broken – her internal world like a desert. Jesus meets her at a well – wanting her to drink deeply of the living water He can provide. He meets us with the same offer today – that we would drink deeply of Him.

Prayer Starter

We thank you Jesus for your living water – the Holy Spirit – that you provide; that meets our needs and 'quenches the thirst' of our souls, becoming a spring that wells up inside of us. We welcome you Holy Spirit – please fill us afresh. We pray that even today we would drink again and drink deeply of your living water – that it would bring peace

and healing, hope and life to the deep places of our souls and that in this time of fasting we would draw from your supply in such a way that this living water will keep flowing within us throughout the year ahead. Amen.

FRIDAY
12 JANUARY

John 5

Focus Verse

John 5:24

Very truly I tell you, whoever hears my word and believes him who sent me has eternal life and will not be judged but has crossed over from death to life.

Devotional Thought

In John 5, there are those who want to kill Jesus, following physical healings and speaking of God as His own Father. Jesus is unapologetic for who He is and for the certainty He has that He is equal with God. He says he is worthy of honour just as the Father is, and yet He is also submitted to God (in doing only what He sees the Father doing). He knows that He has come to enable men and women to cross over from death to life; to have eternal life by believing in Him. He invites us into life and assurance of our eternal salvation in Him as we believe and honour.

Prayer Starter

We thank you Jesus for the indescribable gift of salvation – eternal life through you! We pray that you would be honoured in every area of our lives. And we pray for all those who struggle with doubt or a lack of assurance of their salvation, that as we fast, they would have a fresh revelation of your sufficiency and a deep assurance of their salvation through believing in you. Amen.



SATURDAY
13 JANUARY

John 6

Focus Verse

John 6:35

Then Jesus declared, "I am the bread of life. Whoever comes to me will never go hungry, and whoever believes in me will never be thirsty."

Devotional Thought

Jesus fed the 5000 and his ability to fulfil the need of the vast crowd is a sign that He is the 'bread of life'. It had long been established that 'man cannot live by bread alone.' (Deut. 8:3) but by the provision that comes from God himself, who feeds not just the body, but the soul and spirit too. This was to be found then, as it is now, in Jesus – the bread of life. If we will learn to feed on Him, we will never go hungry.

Prayer Starter

We thank you Jesus that you are the bread of life that came down from Heaven to give life to the world. We pray that we would learn to feed on you, in our hearts, by faith, so that we will never go hungry. We pray that we would not take offence at your Word (even though it may challenge us deeply) – but that we will find your words to be full of Spirit and life; We pray for a fresh hunger and anointing to engage with your Word and that it would bring renewal and revelation to us. Amen.

SUNDAY
14 JANUARY

John 7

Focus Verse

John 7:37-38

Let anyone who is thirsty come to me and drink. Whoever believes in me, as Scripture has said, rivers of living water will flow from within them.

Devotional Thought

On the last day of the Feast of Tabernacles, when the Jewish people remembered the prophetic picture from Ezekiel 47 of the river flowing from the temple, Jesus gives the amazing promise of the Holy Spirit who would be given to those who would believe – that's us! The promise is not only that Holy Spirit would meet the thirst of our own lives but would also flow like a river from within us!

Prayer Starter

I thank you Jesus, for making a way for the Spirit to be poured out into, and flow out from my life. I pray for a fresh infilling and anointing by the Holy Spirit in this time of fasting, and that afterwards, I will walk in another measure of this river of living water! Would you 'measure off another 1000 cubits.' (Ezekiel 47) for me in the measure of your Spirit. I pray also for the church. Let us truly be a Spirit-filled people – changed by you and anointed to impact others. Amen.



MONDAY
15 JANUARY

John 8

Focus Verse

John 8:36

So, if the Son sets you free, you will be free indeed

Devotional Thought

There was much discussion between Jesus and his opponents about truth and freedom. They didn't think that they needed setting free, unaware of the untruths and lies of the enemy that they espoused. Jesus came to set the captives free and the primary way He did this (and does this) is through bringing truth. 'You will know the truth and the truth will set you free.'

Prayer Starter

We thank you Jesus that you came to set the captives free! Thank you that you show us truth, and that when you set us free, we are free indeed! We pray that during this time of prayer and fasting, you will continue to highlight any lies that we accept and allow in our thinking or speaking. We repent where we have accepted or chosen lies instead of the truth. Please forgive us. Would you lead us into all truth. Help us to reject old patterns of thinking that are based on lies and that limit and bind us and help us to replace them with the truth of your Word. Would you enable us as a congregation to be free indeed! Amen.

TUESDAY
16 JANUARY

John 9

Focus Verse

John 9:39

Jesus said, 'For judgment I have come into this world, so that the blind will see and those who see will become blind.'

Devotional Thought

Jesus healed a man born blind which made way for a conversation with his opponents about their spiritual blindness. Jesus announced that He came so that blind eyes could see – both naturally and spiritually, healing of sight and revelation of Jesus. If we can see Him and know Him, it is because He has opened our eyes!

Prayer Starter

We thank you Jesus that you have revealed yourself to us and have removed from us our spiritual blindness. We pray for those who are seeking after God, that you will open their eyes to a revelation of Jesus. We pray that in the year ahead we will see many, many people have a revelation of Jesus that makes way for them to receive Him and to be born again. We pray that we will see physically blind

eyes healed and opened in the year ahead too – to restore those who struggle with impaired vision and to bring honour to your Name. Amen.



WEDNESDAY
17 JANUARY

John 10

Focus Verse

John 10:16

I have other sheep that are not of this sheep pen. I must bring them also. They too will listen to my voice, and there shall be one flock and one shepherd.

Devotional Thought

Jesus reveals himself as the Good Shepherd who comes to bring life in all its fullness! But he isn't simply shepherding those who are already in the fold. He knows that there are others, currently outside, who need to be brought in and who will learn to listen to his voice and will become followers too. Oh that we might share the urgency of Jesus when He says, "I must bring them also".

Prayer Starter

We thank you Jesus that you are the Good Shepherd who laid down your life for us, your sheep. We thank you Jesus for the life that is found in you. We pray for those who have not yet received this life that you offer – that maybe even today, they would hear your voice. We pray that we would catch something more of the Father's heart and the urgency to 'bring them also.' Jesus - give us eyes to see those around our lives who you are seeking to bring also. And we pray again for those we regularly pray for – (name them before God again today) that this year might be the year when they hear, respond, listen to your voice and follow you. Amen.

THURSDAY
18 JANUARY

John 11

Focus Verse

John 11:25

Jesus said to her, 'I am the resurrection and the life. The one who believes in me will live, even though they die.'

Devotional Thought

What first appeared to be a personal tragedy for Mary and Martha, where Jesus weeps with them, becomes an opportunity for one of Jesus' greatest miracles, revealing that Jesus is the resurrection and the life. When Jesus comes into our hearts and lives, this 'incomparably great power' (Eph 1:19) becomes resident in us. We might ask, as Jesus asked Martha, "do you believe this?". He has come that we would indeed believe!

Prayer Starter

We thank you Jesus that you not only weep with us in our sorrow, but you are the Resurrection and the Life and that you promise to those who believe in you, they will live, even though they die. We pray like Paul, in Ephesians 1:18, that the eyes of our hearts may be enlightened in order that we would know this incomparably great power for us who believe; that we would neither fear death – nor live in unbelief. Lord, strengthen our faith that we might truly live out our lives as those who know that 'nothing is impossible for God'; and work your mighty power through us to impact others. Amen.



FRIDAY 19 JANUARY

John 12

Focus Verse

John 12:24

Very truly I tell you, unless a kernel of wheat falls to the ground and dies, it remains only a single seed. But if it dies, it produces many seeds.

Devotional Thought

Although welcomed into Jerusalem as a king, there is growing opposition to Jesus and thoughts of his death and burial are front of mind as He gives his disciples this powerful, prophetic picture: He will die and be buried in the ground like a seed – which will, in due course produce many other seeds, which it could not do, were it not to go into the ground and be broken. Here lies a principle for kingdom fruitfulness – if we will relinquish our hold on what we have and allow it to be sown, perhaps even allowing it to die, then it can be used to bring forth fruit and in time bear other seeds.

Prayer Starter

I thank you Jesus that you laid down your life for me and that I am numbered amongst the many seeds that you speak of, produced

from the seed of your life and death. I pray that as I seek to serve you, I would follow where you lead, willing to surrender all, that kingdom fruitfulness may come forth. Amen.

Are there some things in your life that you need to relinquish or let go of today: hopes or dreams; outcomes you have; maybe even promises from God that you need to 'lay down'? Could you pray today about these things – letting go of them and releasing them into God's hands, allowing them to 'fall to the ground and die' – so that He can work something more fruitful with them? This can be a hard prayer as we find ourselves praying like Jesus in the Garden of Gethsemane, "yet not my will but yours be done." Thank you, Jesus for the promise for the seed sown, that, "if it dies it produces many seeds."

SATURDAY 20 JANUARY

John 13

Focus Verse

John 13:34-35

A new command I give you: Love one another. As I have loved you, so you must love one another. By this everyone will know that you are my disciples, if you love one another.

Devotional Thought

As Jesus knows that the hour for him to die is drawing very close, ahead of predicting his betrayal, he demonstrates the most extraordinary act of love and service by washing his disciples' feet. Some of them struggle at first to allow Him to do this for them. Jesus is giving them a powerful visual example of how they are to serve and to love one another. This is going to be a critical part of their testimony to Him as his disciples. According to Jesus, the defining characteristic of his disciples is that they would demonstrate love for one another. Most of us continue to need reminding of this!

Prayer Starter

We thank you Lord Jesus, for the love and service with which you gave yourself for us – and showed us clearly how to treat one another. We are sorry where we have not done well at loving one another. Please forgive us. We pray today for ourselves and for the church – that we would keep growing in our love for and service of one another. We pray that within the church we would genuinely love one another and that this would be tangible and visible to those outside the church, testifying to them about Jesus. We pray for forgiveness and reconciliation where it is needed, in order to outwork this command that Jesus gave us to love one another. Please bring your healing where there has been hurt and lead us forward in love. Amen.

SUNDAY
21 JANUARY

John 14

Focus Verse

John 14:12

Very truly I tell you, whoever believes in me will do the works I have been doing, and they will do even greater things than these, because I am going to the Father.

Devotional Thought

Jesus is preparing his disciples for his departure, and they still have many questions, as He begins to speak to them about the Holy Spirit. In the middle of this discourse Jesus, speaking of the works that He has done, says these astonishing words to the disciples – that they will do even greater things! This is a challenge to our faith – that we might do greater things than Jesus, but this is what He said, and He empowers his followers for these greater things with the promised Holy Spirit.

Prayer Starter

We thank you Jesus that you showed us what the Father is like and opened up the way for us to come to Him. We thank you Father for giving us the Holy Spirit, who has made his home in us. We pray that we might learn to walk with the Holy Spirit and in his fullness. Lord, increase our faith that we might truly do 'greater things than these,' bringing all the honour and glory to you! Amen.

MONDAY
22 JANUARY

John 15

Focus Verse

John 15:5

I am the vine; you are the branches. If you remain in me and I in you, you will bear much fruit; apart from me you can do nothing.

Devotional Thought

Jesus gives us this picture of himself as the True Vine and us as branches, which helps us to understand our dependence upon Him. If we are separate from Him, then the nourishing, divine life of God will not flow in us, and we won't be able to do anything fruitful. The lesson is clear, that we must always be attentive to remaining in the vine, maintaining a close connection with Jesus. The promise is that as we do this, our lives will bear much fruit.

Prayer Starter

We thank you Jesus that you have made us part of the Vine, and that we can share in the life that flows from you. We thank you that you chose us and have appointed us to go and bear fruit that will last, as we remain in close connection with you. We pray that in this time of fasting, and in the year ahead, we will be

diligent to remain in you. Help us to keep close connection with you; to remain in your love, allowing it to feed, nourish and transform us; and that we will love your words and keep them alive in us, reading them, obeying them and living by them. We pray that as we remain, we will bear much fruit that will last for eternity. Amen.



TUESDAY
23 JANUARY

John 16

Focus Verse

John 16:33

I have told you these things, so that in me you may have peace. In this world you will have trouble. But take heart! I have overcome the world.

Devotional Thought

Jesus is preparing the disciples for life without his physical presence with them when He returns to the Father. He is introducing them to the idea of the Holy Spirit who is going to be with them and whose presence will be crucial to them and who will enable them to have peace – even in the midst of all the trouble that they will face. Jesus doesn't promise to remove their trouble. Rather, he reminds them that he has overcome the world and will be with them, through his Spirit. Whatever trouble we may be facing today, in Him we can take heart and have peace.

Prayer Starter

Thank you, Holy Spirit, for coming to us! We are so grateful that you make your home in us and are forever present with us. We are thankful that you enable us to

overcome, and to bring us peace, even and especially in the middle of trouble. We pray today that we might experience the peace of God that surpasses understanding, despite what may be going on around us. Help us too, to minister this peace to others in the troubles of life, encouraging them to find help in Jesus and to overcome. We pray for those in the midst of a troubling time that they might be able to take heart and to find strength and peace in the Presence of the Holy Spirit with them. Amen.

WEDNESDAY
24 JANUARY

John 17

Focus Verse

John 17:22-23

I have given them the glory that you gave me, that they may be one as we are one— I in them and you in me—so that they may be brought to complete unity. Then the world will know that you sent me and have loved them even as you have loved me.

Devotional Thought

Here we get an insight into what Jesus is praying about at this critical time, just before He goes to the cross. He is praying for his followers – the disciples He was leaving then, and those who would come to believe in Him – which includes us! The thrust of his prayer is that we would be 'one.' Not a fragile unity, but complete unity that mirrors something of the relationship between the Father, Son and Holy Spirit. This unity will speak volumes to the world about who Jesus is, which suggests that our unity will inform the world's theology. In an echo of the command of chapter 13 (to love one another), Jesus prays for his followers that they will show what He is like by their love and how they treat one another. As Jesus prayed for this, we should too!

Prayer Starter

Thank you Jesus for your desire that those who follow you would be with you! Thank you that you have made the Father known. Thank you that by the power of your Holy Spirit you have given the help that we need to love one another and to walk in unity with one another. I am sorry where I have fallen short, struggled to forgive, and failed to pursue unity. Do a work in my heart Lord. Give me a greater love for my brothers and sisters in Christ. Please help your Church to look like your family and to demonstrate your beauty and love. Help us as CLM; and keep drawing your Church in the city together into greater unity. Amen.

THURSDAY
25 JANUARY

John 18

Focus Verse

John 18:37

Jesus answered, "You say that I am a king. In fact, the reason I was born and came into the world is to testify to the truth. Everyone on the side of truth listens to me."

Devotional Thought

Jesus is arrested, denied by Peter and then questioned by the High Priest and sent to Pilate. He tells Pilate that He came into the world to bring truth and, "everyone on the side of truth listens to me." At this point Pilate stopped listening to Jesus, returned to the crowd and listened to them. He responded to what they wanted, rather than the truth of Jesus. This may cause us to wonder – are we on the side of truth? Who are we listening to? Is it Jesus and the truth He brings, or the 'crowd' of voices around our lives? What would the impact be if we listened, above all, to the truth of Jesus this year?

Prayer Starter

We thank you Jesus that you are the Way, the Truth and the Life. We thank you that in the midst of a world full of lies, confusion and misunderstanding, you have come to show us the Way and to testify to truth. We pray that we would listen to you, Jesus, especially when you speak to us about ourselves. We pray that you would help us to be a church that learns to discern and to know your voice, and to choose to listen to you above all the voices of the world, however loudly they may clamour for our attention. We pray that we would each continue being disciplined to Jesus, by his truth, without dilution or compromise. We pray that the law of our land will allow us the freedom and liberty to live in and to speak this truth. Amen

FRIDAY
26 JANUARY

John 19

Focus Verse

John 19:39

He was accompanied by Nicodemus, the man who earlier had visited Jesus at night. Nicodemus brought a mixture of myrrh and aloes, about seventy-five pounds.

Devotional Thought

In this epic chapter, Jesus lays down his life and cries out, 'it is finished'. This is an unparalleled moment in human history. Later, John tells us that Joseph of Arimathea asks to take Jesus' body and he is accompanied by Nicodemus, who brings an unusually generous quantity of burial spices. Both men had been secret followers of Jesus, but now they risk their reputations. These undercover seekers step out of the shadows to express their honour lavishly and extravagantly at the point when it is arguably the most dangerous time to publicly do so! Will we be challenged and inspired? Will we also, in response to Christ's sacrifice, risk our reputations to bring him honour, regardless of the potential consequences?

Prayer Starter

We thank you Jesus for all that you endured through your trial and crucifixion and for the finished work of the cross! Thank you for dealing with our sin, our shame, our pride, our selfishness and our rebellion. Thank you that through your death it is finished! We pray that you would fill us again with your Holy Spirit and with boldness. Then may we not hide our belief in you, out of fear of others. Rather, help us to extravagantly love and honour you, and be seen to do so. Please root out our fear and give us opportunities to testify to you and to stand for you, that your name would be greatly honoured! Amen

SATURDAY 27 JANUARY

John 20

Focus Verse

John 20:21-22

Again, Jesus said, "Peace be with you! As the Father has sent me, I am sending you." And with that he breathed on them and said, "Receive the Holy Spirit."

Devotional Thought

The tomb is empty! Jesus is alive! Death has been defeated! His Father is now our Father and His God, our God! The fullness of our reconciliation is complete! Jesus appears to his disciples so that they know and can testify that He is risen. The Risen Jesus brings peace – not even death could hold Him – what is there left to fear? The Risen Jesus sends his followers and breathes on them, equipping them with his Holy Spirit. The Risen Jesus is still sending his followers and still breathing his Holy Spirit onto them. May we receive again today and go out empowered!

Prayer Starter

We thank you Jesus for your peace – the victory is yours, even over death! And we thank you for the precious gift of your Holy Spirit.

breathed onto us and into us. We thank you that we are blessed as those who have not seen, but who have believed. We pray that today we would receive your peace again. Fill our hearts with your peace and cast out all fear. We pray that you would breathe on us again, another measure of your Holy Spirit and send us out as your witnesses in our families, with our neighbours and in our places of work, study and connection. Help us to be those who testify to the Risen Christ! Amen.



SUNDAY 28 JANUARY

John 21

Focus Verse

John 21:7

Then the disciple whom Jesus loved said to Peter, "It is the Lord!" As soon as Simon Peter heard him say, "It is the Lord," he wrapped his outer garment around him (for he had taken it off) and jumped into the water.

Devotional Thought

Jesus appears to the disciples again as they are out fishing. At the instruction of a 'man' on the shore they throw their net down on the other side of the boat and bring in a miraculous catch of fish. At this moment, John realises it is Jesus! The Risen Jesus shows up in the midst of their everyday working lives and something extraordinary happens. Peter's response is to jump right in and to move towards Jesus. As we come to the conclusion of 21 days, what might it look like if the Risen Jesus showed up in your everyday life? What would you like Him to do? Are you ready to jump right in and move towards Him?

Prayer Starter

We thank you Jesus that although risen and exalted, you are still at work in the earth, through the Holy

Spirit! Thank you that you know all about the details of our lives, the people we rub shoulders with and the needs that we and they have. Thank you that you want to show up in the ordinary places to bring the extraordinary hope, grace, love, provision and power of your kingdom. We pray for our families; we pray for our colleagues and our neighbours. We pray for the places where a change is desperately needed. We welcome and invite you into all the ordinary places of our lives. Please presence yourself!

Take some time to name specific people and situations to Jesus...

We pray for our city and nation – would you reveal and presence yourself in the ordinary places; and release your extraordinary, resurrection power, bringing life and light into the world. Kingdom come! Amen.

Fasting

What is Fasting?

Over the last few years at CLM we have held quarterly times of Prayer and Fasting – either whole weeks or three days. It is a priority for us as a church.

Simply put, fasting is a spiritual discipline which is taught in the Bible, whereby food is reduced or eliminated during a period of prayer.

The New Testament clearly teaches fasting to be a 'normal' part of the Christian's life. Jesus taught His disciples about fasting (Matthew 6:16-18) and He undertook a very significant fast Himself before he began His ministry (Luke 4:1-15). The disciples heard God speak to them 'while worshipping and fasting' (Acts 13:2), they commissioned Paul and Barnabas after fasting and praying (Acts 13:3) and appointed elders 'with prayer and fasting' (Acts 14:23).

Fasting can be hugely beneficial during a time of seeking God. The discipline of reducing or eliminating food can help to bring the appetites of our body and soul under submission. In Psalm 35:13 (NASB),

David says, 'I humbled my soul with fasting'. In 1 Corinthians 9:27, Paul says 'I discipline my body' - no doubt helped by the fact that he was 'often in fasting' (2 Corinthians 11:27 ESV).

Fasting can also heighten our spiritual sensitivity and it is not uncommon to sense the Presence of God more strongly than normal during a time of prayer and fasting. Fasting can also create both extra time and additional focus for our praying and worship.

Besides this, the Bible shows us that fasting can be fruitful in other ways too:

- In the Book of Esther, a corporate time of fasting brought forth an amazing breakthrough (Esther 4:16-5:3).
- In Ezra, God's people were protected as they fasted and prayed (Ezra 8:22-23).
- In Judges (Ch.20:26-28) God's people were delivered as they sought the Lord with prayer and fasting.

And Jehoshaphat called the people of Judah to a fast when they were being attacked on all sides. As they declared their dependence upon God through prayer, the Lord brought about a famous victory (2 Chronicles 20:2-25).

We will not impress God by our fasting, although the discipline of fasting can definitely help us to be more prayerful and draw near to God, and it is not uncommon to experience some kind of breakthrough following a fast.

Types of Fasting

There are various forms of fasting. Online studies may categorise differently. Although there are other forms, we would differentiate between four main types:

The Full Fast

This is the elimination of all food for a period of time. Some might only drink water, others might drink fruit juices at standard meal-times (which can be surprisingly sustaining) or some other liquids such as squash – hot or cold. This might be for a day, or a number of days. This is the normal type of fast found in the Bible.

The Partial Fast

This is where food is eaten, but not at certain times – for example: forgoing lunch or not eating before 6:00pm.

The Selective (or 'Daniel') Fast

This is where particular foods are not eaten during a period of fasting. In Daniel 10, Daniel fasted from 'choice foods, meat and wine' for a period of 21 days and then he received a breakthrough. It would be common for people undertaking a 'Daniel fast' to eliminate snacks, sweet foods, treats, meats and alcohol.

The Soul Fast

This is where certain elements of distraction and/or entertainment are eliminated either entirely, or during certain periods of time. It could mean coming off YouTube, Social Media, TikTok, and/or TV/Netflix altogether or during certain hours, in order to pray. It could mean limiting 'screen time' each day. This type of fasting can be helpful for everyone, either alongside a food fast of some type, or in place of a food fast, for those who are unable or unwise to fast from food.

Fasting

What Fast to Undertake

During the 21 Days of Prayer, we are encouraging everyone at CLM to consider fasting in some way, for at least some of the time, as part of a special season of devotion to God.

It is important to remember that fasting is to help you to pray and to press into God.

It is neither compulsory, nor a competition!

We recommend you ask God what He wants you to do.

If God speaks to you clearly, then have faith to step out.

Ordinarily, we would recommend building your stamina. For instance, if you have never fasted at all before, then a 'normal fast' for one or two days per week, or a partial fast might be a good way to begin.

Also, if you are taking medication, if you are pregnant, if you are still growing, if you have an eating disorder, or struggle with disordered eating*, we would recommend you plan a soul fast and seek medical advice if you want to do more. If for

any reason, emotional or physical, you normally struggle to take on board the necessary amount of calories for healthy living, then we would recommend that you don't undertake a food fast. Similarly, if you have unhealthy or controlling habits around your eating (often indicated by the fact you would not want people to know about them) we would encourage you not to fast from food.

Also, we often say at CLM "it is not what you fast from, but what you fast to that is most important".

What we mean by this is that creating time for prayer and worship, and to be studying God's Word is more important than what food you are cutting out. Fasting without prayer is starvation. Fasting with prayer is great gain!

* If you struggle with disordered eating, we encourage you to seek medical help from your GP or Eating Disorder Charity, Beat (0808 801 0677)

Practical Tips

Here are a few tips if you are new to fasting:

1. Plan well

Decide at least a few days in advance exactly what you will do – when you will start your fast (determining the last time you will eat before you begin your fast); when you will break your fast; and exactly what you will fast from. Thinking it through and being very clear will really help you to stay on track and apply yourself mentally.

2. Don't forget that God is with you!

This might seem strange to say, but it is surprisingly easy to drop into a mentality of thinking you are doing this *for God*. It is good to approach

fasting knowing that you are doing this *with God*. He wants to walk it with you. He wants to assure you with His presence when you feel hungry. Talk to Him about how you feel. Let Him be your comfort and your reward.

3. Consider your responsibilities

If you are married, discuss your plans with your spouse. Consider your work commitments. If you have children or other dependents, consider what they will need and how you will factor that in. Be wise and realistic and don't abandon your responsibilities!

4. Water and caffeine

If you are undertaking a full (food) fast, remember to drink more water



than usual (to compensate for the fluid intake that normally comes through food). Also, if you are a regular coffee or tea drinker, it is common to experience headaches (especially in the first couple of days) if coming off caffeine during a full (food) fast. If you come off caffeine 2-3 days before you begin your food fast, it can help significantly.

5. Rest

If you are undertaking a 'full fast' for more than 2 days, be ready to make sure you have time to rest well. As you take in less 'fuel' than normal, you may feel a little tired and some extra rest or sleep time will help.

6. Don't be surprised by:

- **The Cold**

Again, if food fasting, you may feel a couple of degrees colder than normal, so wear an additional layer!

- **Heightened emotions**

With the absence of food, you may feel a little irritable at times! Position yourself joyfully and determine to be gracious with those around you – especially the ones closest to home.

- **Bad Breath**

Regular brushing of teeth, the use of mouth wash and/or chewing gum should help.

7. Re-entry

Firstly, you are likely to have made some significant spiritual progress. Don't be in a hurry to return to old habits! Hold the ground you have taken. Consider what needs to change ongoing now.

Secondly, if you have undertaken an extended period of fasting from food, be gentle on re-entry. Some soup and bread in small portions might be a wise start and avoid rich foods until your body has returned to normal. If you are undertaking a full fast for more than seven days for the first time, we recommend you read up on how to break your fast in a healthy way. There are some helpful articles on our website.

Finally

It is so important for us to recognise that fasting doesn't change God or His willingness to hear us. However, it does change us and it can be a gateway for breakthrough. The author and theologian Andrew Murray said, "Fasting helps to express, to deepen, to confirm the resolution that we are ready to sacrifice anything...to attain what we seek for the kingdom of God".

May you grow in God, know His Presence powerfully, and experience breakthrough as you seek Him through prayer and fasting!



