21

DAYS OF PRAYER + FASTING

Draw Near

JANUARY 10 – 31, 2027 · PROPHETIC EMPHASIS MONTH

CHURCH ON THE LIVING EDGE

COME CLOSE · PRAY BOLDLY · WALK DIFFERENTLY

What's Inside

A Letter from Pastors Mario and Misty	3
How to Use This Guide	4
Fasting Guide	5
Praying at the Altar	7
The 21 Marks	8
1 · Draw Near Days 1–7	10
2 · Seek His Face Days 8–14	24
3 · Believe & Become Days 15–21	38
Beyond Day Twenty-One	52
Notes	53

Follow along online, too: 21days.cotleorlando.com

A LETTER FROM PASTORS MARIO AND MISTY

Dear COTLE family,

Every new year asks us a quiet question: what will get our first attention? For these 21 days, we are answering it together. We are giving God our first and our best, and we are drawing near to Him as one church.

James 4:8 holds the promise we are leaning on: "Draw near to God and He will draw near to you." Notice who moves. We are not climbing toward a distant God. We are turning toward the One who is already reaching for us. Fasting does not earn His nearness. It clears room for it.

January is our Prophetic Emphasis Month, and we are expecting to hear from God. But hear our heart: the goal of these 21 days is not a word, an experience, or a result. The goal is Him. Everything we are believing for flows from who He is. Because He is our Healer, we are believing for healing. Because He is our Provider, we are believing for provision. Because He restores and saves, we are believing for broken relationships to be mended and for the people we love to come home to Jesus. Because He leads His church, we are believing for continued direction for our house. We bring all of it to the altar, and we trust Him with every outcome.

> **FASTING DOES NOT EARN HIS NEARNESS. IT CLEARS ROOM FOR IT.**

Some of you have fasted for years. Some of you are trying it for the first time. Some of you can't fast from food for health reasons, and that is alright. Wherever you are starting, start there. This is not a test and it is not a contest. It is an invitation.

Each day you will find a passage of Scripture, a short devotional, a prayer we will pray together, and one simple practice. Mark each day as you go. Miss a day? Pick right back up. Grace is built into this journey.

We are praying for you, and we can't wait to see what God does in us and through us as we seek Him together. We come close. We pray boldly. We walk differently.

Drawing near with you,

Pastors Mario and Misty

LEAD PASTORS

P.S. Bring your requests to the altar. We will be praying over every one.

HOW TO USE THIS GUIDE

Start Here

You don't have to do this perfectly. Begin where you are, and walk with your church family one day at a time.

01

Read

Each day opens with a passage of Scripture. Read it first, then the short devotional.

02

Reflect

Sit with the question. If it helps, write one word or a few lines. Your notes are private.

03

Pray together

Pray the corporate prayer out loud if you can. You don't need polished words. We pray as one church.

04

Practice

Each day has one small, concrete practice. Do it today.

05

Mark the day

Check off the day in the 21 Marks tracker. Missed a day? Go back and catch up. There are no broken streaks here.

Three movements. Draw Near (Days 1–7), **Seek His Face** (Days 8–14), **Believe & Become** (Days 15–21).

Fasting Guide

We fast not to persuade God to be good or to earn a result, but to return to Him, deepen communion, offer ourselves in consecration, and seek His intervention with genuine expectation.

What fasting is

Christian fasting is setting aside something ordinary, usually food, for a season so that we can give ourselves more fully to prayer. The hunger becomes a reminder to turn toward God. Jesus assumed His followers would fast (Matthew 6:16), and the early church fasted when it sought the Lord together (Acts 13:2–3).

What fasting is not

Fasting is not a hunger strike against heaven, a way to earn God's favor, or a contest of discipline. It is not a diet. God already loves you. Fasting makes room for you to draw near to the One who is already gracious and compassionate.

Choose a wise plan

- **Partial fast:** set aside certain foods, such as meat, sweets, or rich food, for the 21 days.
- **Meal fast:** skip one meal a day and spend that time in prayer.
- **Time-window fast:** eat only within set hours, for example from noon to 6 PM.
- **Non-food fast:** set aside social media, streaming, or another habit that crowds out prayer.

Pick a plan you can keep for the whole season. A modest fast held faithfully is better than an ambitious one abandoned on Day 3.

Health comes first

If you are pregnant or nursing, have diabetes or another chronic condition, take medication that depends on food, or have a history of disordered eating, please talk with a qualified clinician before changing how you eat. A non-food fast is a full and faithful way to take part.

Fasting should never replace necessary medical care. Stay hydrated. If you feel faint, dizzy, or unwell, eat something and adjust your plan. That is wisdom, not failure.

Kids and teens

Every family is different. Parents, you know your children best, so decide together whether and how your kids and teens take part.

Younger children can fast from something other than food, like video games, YouTube, a favorite show, or screen time, and use those minutes to pray, read a Bible story, or do something kind for someone.

Teens may be ready for more, such as skipping one meal or setting aside sweets, if you agree it's wise. Keep it modest, make sure they stay hydrated and eat well at other meals, and talk with your pediatrician first if there's any health concern or history of disordered eating.

Whatever they choose, celebrate their faithfulness, not their perfection.

Build a prayer rhythm

- Choose a set time and place each day for the reading and prayer.
- When hunger or the urge to scroll interrupts you, let it become a prompt to pray.
- Pray for the requests at the altar, not only your own.
- Gather with the church on Sundays during the fast.

CORPORATE INTERCESSION

Praying at the Altar

Throughout these 21 days, we are bringing our requests to the altar together, and we are praying over one another's needs.

01

In person

Bring your written request to the altar at any service during the 21 days.

02

By email

Email your request. Our staff will print it and place it at the altar alongside the requests received in person.

03

Pray for others

Throughout the season, the congregation prays over these requests. When you are at the altar, pray for a need that isn't your own.

Email your request to
pray@cotleorlando.com

Sensitive needs. Requests placed at the altar may be seen by others who pray over them. For anything sensitive or confidential, please don't put it on the altar. Speak with one of our pastors directly, and they will pray with you privately.

YOUR 21-DAY TRACKER

The 21 Marks

Fill in each circle and write one word for the day. Missed one? Catch up anytime.

1 · Draw Near

1. Even Now Sun, Jan 10 _____
2. More Than Bread Mon, Jan 11 _____
3. The Fast That Reaches Others Tue, Jan 12 _____
4. The Father Who Sees Wed, Jan 13 _____
5. Present Your Whole Self Thu, Jan 14 _____
6. A Clean Heart, Not a Perfect Record Fri, Jan 15 _____
7. Come Boldly Sat, Jan 16 _____

2 · Seek His Face

8. One Thing Sun, Jan 17 _____
9. The Bridegroom Mon, Jan 18 _____
10. Be Still in the Storm Tue, Jan 19 _____
11. Teach Us to Pray Wed, Jan 20 _____
12. Help in Our Weakness Thu, Jan 21 _____
13. While They Worshiped Fri, Jan 22 _____
14. Discern What Is Good Sat, Jan 23 _____

3 · Believe & Become

15. When You Don't Know What to Do Sun, Jan 24 _____
16. We Sought Our God Mon, Jan 25 _____
17. The Church Was Praying Tue, Jan 26 _____
18. Keep Asking Wed, Jan 27 _____
19. Call the Elders Thu, Jan 28 _____
20. Light That Breaks Forth Fri, Jan 29 _____
21. Beyond Day Twenty-One Sat, Jan 30 _____

THE JOURNEY

Three Movements

1 Draw Near DAYS 1–7

Return, dependence, integrity, surrender, repentance, confidence.

1. Even Now Joel 2:12–17
2. More Than Bread Matthew 4:1–4
3. The Fast That Reaches Others Isaiah 58:1–12
4. The Father Who Sees Matthew 6:16–18
5. Present Your Whole Self Romans 12:1–2
6. A Clean Heart, Not a Perfect Record Psalm 51:1–12
7. Come Boldly Hebrews 4:14–16

2 Seek His Face DAYS 8–14

Longing, prayer, presence, Spirit-assisted intercession, discernment.

8. One Thing Psalm 27:1–8
9. The Bridegroom Matthew 9:14–17
10. Be Still in the Storm Psalm 46:1–11
11. Teach Us to Pray Luke 11:1–13
12. Help in Our Weakness Romans 8:18–27
13. While They Worshiped Acts 13:1–3
14. Discern What Is Good Philippians 1:9–11

3 Believe & Become DAYS 15–21

Corporate intercession, protection, healing, provision, restoration, life in the Spirit.

15. When You Don't Know What to Do 2 Chronicles 20:1–22
16. We Sought Our God Ezra 8:21–23
17. The Church Was Praying Acts 12:1–17
18. Keep Asking Matthew 7:7–11
19. Call the Elders James 5:13–18
20. Light That Breaks Forth Isaiah 58:6–12
21. Beyond Day Twenty-One Galatians 5:16–25

Even Now

Returning to God with expectation.

READ FIRST · OPEN YOUR BIBLE TO

Joel 2:12–17

Two words change the direction of Joel's message: **Even now.**

Judah was facing devastation. Yet in the middle of their crisis, God issued an invitation to return to Him.

But here's what we sometimes miss.

In verse 13, Joel tells the people to *rend their hearts and not their garments*. Tearing one's garments was an outward expression of grief and repentance. God wasn't rejecting the outward act. He was confronting the possibility of an outward response without an inward return.

> The issue wasn't whether they would demonstrate their desperation. It was whether their desperation would draw them back to God.

That's an important distinction as we begin fasting.

We have real needs, and we are believing God for real breakthroughs. But our fasting is not a demonstration intended to persuade Him. It is an expression of hearts turning toward the One who is already gracious and compassionate.

And because of who He is, we can begin with expectation.

Even now, we can return. Even now, we can pray. Even now, we can believe.

VOICES THROUGH THE AGES

Basil the Great 4TH CENTURY

Basil the Great insisted that genuine fasting reaches beyond what is on the table to how we live toward our neighbors. His preaching helps us see why Joel joins outward practice to inward change.

Further reading: Basil, Homilies on Fasting

REFLECT

Where might I be focusing more on demonstrating my need to God than drawing near to Him?

CORPORATE PRAYER

Father, even now You invite us to return. We come as one church with open hearts and real needs. Search us, restore us, and teach us to seek You with sincerity. We believe You are able to heal, provide, reconcile, deliver, and make a way. As our requests are placed at the altar, make us faithful in carrying one another before You. In Jesus' name, amen.

TODAY'S PRACTICE

Name two or three areas where you are believing God to intervene. Submit a prayer request in person or through the designated church email, and spend a moment praising God for His character before asking for an answer.

CARRY THIS WITH YOU

Even now is not too late to return, pray, and believe.

MY PRAYER TODAY

◯ I read and prayed Day 1. One word for today: _____

More Than Bread

Hunger can remind us whose word sustains us.

READ FIRST · OPEN YOUR BIBLE TO

Matthew 4:1–4

Matthew tells us Jesus was led by the Spirit into the wilderness, where He fasted. Notice the order: **the Spirit led Him before the hunger came.** His fast did not begin with a failure, a crisis of faith, or an attempt to gain the Father's approval. At His baptism, the Father had already called Him His beloved Son.

Then the tempter approached with a proposal: turn stones into bread. Food was a legitimate need. The temptation was not simply to eat; it was to let an immediate need dictate His obedience.

Jesus answered from Deuteronomy: people do not live by bread alone, but by God's word.

Fasting does not teach us that physical needs are unimportant. It exposes how quickly a genuine need can become the voice we obey first.

During these 21 days, when hunger or inconvenience interrupts your routine, let it become a summons to remember the Father's faithfulness. We can ask God for provision while refusing to let our circumstances define what is true about Him.

VOICES THROUGH THE AGES

Amma Syncletica 4TH CENTURY

One of the desert mothers, Amma Syncletica taught that a simple table and a fasting body could free the heart from the pull of luxury. Where the world prizes rich food, she saw plain bread as a doorway to a deeper fullness in God.

Further reading: Sayings of the Desert Fathers; Laura Swan, The Forgotten Desert Mothers

REFLECT

Which immediate need most often takes command of my attention or decisions?

CORPORATE PRAYER

Father, we thank You that Your love is not earned by our discipline. Sustain us by Your word and give us wisdom to obey You when our needs feel urgent. Provide for families under pressure, strengthen those who are weary, and teach us to trust Your faithfulness. Amen.

TODAY'S PRACTICE

At the first interruption caused by your fast, pause for one minute and read Matthew 4:4. Pray for someone facing a material need.

CARRY THIS WITH YOU

A real need does not have to become our ruling voice.

MY PRAYER TODAY

◯ I read and prayed Day 2. One word for today: _____

The Fast That Reaches Others

Fasting without neighbor-love misses God's concern.

READ FIRST · OPEN YOUR BIBLE TO

Isaiah 58:1–12

In Isaiah 58, the people are confused. They have fasted, but they believe God has not noticed. The prophet's answer is unsettling: **God has noticed what happens outside their prayer gatherings, too.**

They are abstaining from food while exploiting workers and quarreling with one another. Their religious practice and their daily conduct tell competing stories.

Then God describes the fast He chooses: loosening injustice, sharing bread with the hungry, welcoming the vulnerable, and refusing to turn away from those in need.

Here is the surprising connection: **the very food withheld during a fast becomes a reminder of the food someone else lacks.** Our voluntary hunger can awaken compassion for another person's involuntary hunger.

Isaiah does not remove expectation. The chapter goes on to describe light, healing, guidance, and restoration. But it refuses to separate flourishing from righteousness and generosity.

As we ask God to move in our lives, we also ask Him to make us participants in His mercy toward others.

VOICES THROUGH THE AGES

John Chrysostom 4TH CENTURY

John Chrysostom repeatedly connected fasting to mercy and changed behavior. Abstinence that leaves our treatment of others untouched is spiritually incomplete.

Further reading: Chrysostom's homilies on fasting and repentance

REFLECT

Who might benefit from the time, attention, or resources my fast is freeing up?

CORPORATE PRAYER

Lord, deliver us from devotion that leaves our neighbors unseen. Open our eyes to those who are hungry, lonely, burdened, or overlooked. Let Your justice and compassion take shape among us, and bring healing and restoration to our community. Amen.

TODAY'S PRACTICE

Set aside the cost of one meal, where appropriate, to help someone in need, or make a concrete act of generosity today.

CARRY THIS WITH YOU

The fast that draws us toward God should also open our hands toward others.

MY PRAYER TODAY

◯ I read and prayed Day 3. One word for today: _____

The Father Who Sees

Hidden devotion is never invisible to God.

READ FIRST · OPEN YOUR BIBLE TO

Matthew 6:16–18

When Jesus teaches about fasting, He does not begin by specifying the menu. He begins by addressing the audience.

Some people altered their appearance so everyone would know they were fasting. Their hunger had become a public announcement. Jesus tells His disciples to wash their faces and carry on without making a performance of it.

The issue is not whether other people ever know we are fasting. Jesus is speaking to a community that will practice fasting. The issue is whether we need to be seen by people in order to feel that our devotion matters.

Jesus repeats a beautiful assurance: the Father sees what is done in secret.

Our private prayer is not less real because it is unobserved. Our fast is not less meaningful because no one congratulates us. And our needs are not forgotten because we have not found dramatic words to describe them.

We can pray boldly without performing spirituality. The Father already sees.

VOICES THROUGH THE AGES

John Wesley 1748

John Wesley called fasting a means of grace that God has ordained and will bless, but never an end in itself. He warned that an outward fast without an inward turning only afflicts the body, and he insisted that fasting always travel with earnest prayer.

Further reading: Sermon 27, Upon Our Lord's Sermon on the Mount, Discourse 7

REFLECT

Am I more concerned with being recognized as devoted than with actually being present to God?

CORPORATE PRAYER

Father, free us from comparison and spiritual performance. Form sincerity in us. As we pray together, teach us to seek Your attention above human approval, and remind every person carrying a hidden burden that You see them. Amen.

TODAY'S PRACTICE

Spend five minutes in private prayer without sharing or posting about it. Lift up an unspoken need represented in our congregation.

CARRY THIS WITH YOU

What is hidden from others is not hidden from the Father.

MY PRAYER TODAY

◯ I read and prayed Day 4. One word for today: _____

Present Your Whole Self

Consecration is embodied worship.

READ FIRST · OPEN YOUR BIBLE TO

Romans 12:1–2

Paul urges believers to present their bodies as a living sacrifice. That is striking language because sacrifices are usually placed on an altar once. **A living sacrifice must keep choosing to offer itself.**

Paul does not ask us to escape the body to become spiritual. He asks us to offer our actual lives: what we eat, how we speak, what we do with our time, and how we treat people.

That helps explain why fasting is more than a mental exercise. The body participates in prayer. When we change an ordinary pattern, we are reminded that worship involves more than the words we sing.

But notice Paul's opening phrase: this appeal comes **by the mercies of God**. We do not present ourselves in order to make God merciful. We offer ourselves because His mercy has already reached us.

Consecration is not an attempt to become acceptable through effort. It is the grateful response of people who belong to God.

VOICES THROUGH THE AGES

John Cassian 5TH CENTURY

John Cassian treats bodily disciplines as means ordered toward spiritual health, not as ends in themselves. The practice must serve the goal of a life directed toward God.

Further reading: Institutes, Book V; Conferences, especially Conference I

REFLECT

What everyday habit would look different if I understood it as part of my worship?

CORPORATE PRAYER

Merciful God, we offer ourselves to You again. Renew our minds, guide our habits, and make our lives an expression of Your goodness. As we seek You for change around us, continue Your work within us. Amen.

TODAY'S PRACTICE

Choose one ordinary action today, a meal, commute, conversation, or task, and intentionally offer it to God as worship.

CARRY THIS WITH YOU

Worship is not only what we say to God; it is what we offer Him.

MY PRAYER TODAY

◯ I read and prayed Day 5. One word for today: _____

A Clean Heart, Not a Perfect Record

Repentance rests on mercy, not self-improvement.

READ FIRST · OPEN YOUR BIBLE TO

Psalm 51:1–12

David's prayer in Psalm 51 begins with an appeal to God's lovingkindness, not a list of his accomplishments. He does not try to offset his sin with impressive spiritual activity.

Then he asks something extraordinary: **"Create in me a clean heart."** The verb *create* recalls God's creative work. David is not merely asking for a better-managed version of himself. He is asking God to do what he cannot accomplish through willpower alone.

That is one reason fasting must never become a contest in self-control. We can change our routines, but only God can renew the heart.

Perhaps you began these 21 days carrying regret, or perhaps a few days of fasting have exposed impatience, pride, or a pattern you have ignored. That discovery need not lead to despair. It can become an invitation to confession and grace.

We come honestly because God's mercy is greater than our ability to repair ourselves.

VOICES THROUGH THE AGES

Augustine 5TH CENTURY

Augustine read Psalm 51 as the prayer of someone who has stopped defending himself. To confess, he taught, is to stand with God against our own sin, and the one who does that has already stepped onto the side of mercy.

Further reading: Expositions on the Psalms, Psalm 51 (50 in his numbering)

REFLECT

What am I trying to manage outwardly that I need to surrender honestly to God?

CORPORATE PRAYER

Lord, have mercy on us. Where we have sinned, lead us to confession and repentance. Create clean hearts within us, restore joy where shame has taken hold, and teach us to extend the grace we have received. Amen.

TODAY'S PRACTICE

Make room for honest confession. Where appropriate and safe, take one step toward making a wrong right.

CARRY THIS WITH YOU

God can renew what self-improvement cannot reach.

MY PRAYER TODAY

◯ I read and prayed Day 6. One word for today: _____

Come Boldly

Our confidence rests in Jesus, not our fasting performance.

READ FIRST · OPEN YOUR BIBLE TO

Hebrews 4:14–16

Hebrews invites us to approach the throne of grace with confidence. That invitation might seem surprising because the passage also reminds us that God is holy and that Jesus is our great high priest.

Here is the good news: **we are not told to come boldly because we have prayed well enough. We come because Jesus has opened the way.**

The writer says our high priest can sympathize with our weaknesses. He knows human testing, yet without sin. We do not have to conceal our weariness, questions, or unmet needs to approach Him.

And notice what we are invited to receive: mercy and grace to help in time of need.

At the end of this first week, some of us may feel spiritually energized. Others may feel distracted or disappointed with how their fast has gone. Neither condition determines whether we may draw near.

Our confidence is Christ. So we bring our families, burdens, and hopes before God again.

VOICES THROUGH THE AGES

John Chrysostom 4TH CENTURY

John Chrysostom pointed out that Hebrews calls it a throne of grace. For now it is a throne of grace; one day it will be a throne of judgment. The invitation to come boldly is for today, while mercy is freely offered.

Further reading: Homilies on Hebrews, on 4:16

REFLECT

Have I been measuring my access to God by how successfully I have practiced fasting?

CORPORATE PRAYER

Jesus, our great high priest, thank You for welcoming us in weakness. We bring every request at our altar before Your throne of grace. Give mercy, timely help, healing, peace, and renewed courage. Keep our confidence anchored in You. Amen.

TODAY'S PRACTICE

Pray aloud for three categories of needs: your household, someone else's household, and the wider church family.

CARRY THIS WITH YOU

Our boldness comes from our Savior, not our spiritual scorecard.

MY PRAYER TODAY

◯ I read and prayed Day 7. One word for today: _____

One Thing

God's presence is not merely a means to another end.

READ FIRST · OPEN YOUR BIBLE TO

Psalm 27:1–8

Psalm 27 begins with danger: enemies, fear, and the possibility of trouble. David is not living in a problem-free world. Yet in the middle of it, he says there is **one thing** he seeks: to dwell in the presence of the Lord and behold His beauty.

That is not denial. David still needs protection. The surprising thing is that **his greatest desire is not reduced to the removal of his greatest threat.**

We can easily approach prayer with a list of problems and leave the moment those problems are addressed. David shows us another possibility: the God who answers our prayers is Himself our treasure.

During these 21 days, keep asking for healing, provision, and direction. But also make room to enjoy the Lord without asking Him to do anything first.

We seek His hand because we trust His goodness. We seek His face because we love Him.

VOICES THROUGH THE AGES

Maximus the Confessor 7TH CENTURY

Maximus the Confessor taught that every virtue helps the soul toward the love of God, but pure prayer most of all: it gives the mind wings. His aim was not more spiritual activity but a heart that loves God Himself above every gift.

Further reading: Four Hundred Chapters on Love, First Century

REFLECT

If I received no immediate answer today, what would it look like to seek God's presence anyway?

CORPORATE PRAYER

Lord, You are our light and salvation. Meet us in the pressures we face, and deepen our love for Your presence. We ask for real help while confessing that no gift is greater than knowing You. Amen.

TODAY'S PRACTICE

Begin your prayer time with three minutes of praise and adoration before presenting requests.

CARRY THIS WITH YOU

We seek God's help without reducing God to the help we seek.

MY PRAYER TODAY

◯ I read and prayed Day 8. One word for today: _____

The Bridegroom

Christian fasting is shaped by longing for Jesus.

READ FIRST · OPEN YOUR BIBLE TO

Matthew 9:14–17

People asked Jesus why His disciples were not fasting like other religious groups. His answer was not a rejection of fasting. He spoke about a wedding.

You do not mourn the bridegroom's absence while the bridegroom is standing in the room. Jesus' presence changed the meaning of the moment. Then He said a time would come when His disciples would fast.

That gives Christian fasting a distinctive center. We are not merely practicing restraint or demonstrating seriousness. We are expressing our longing for the One who has come, who is present to us by the Spirit, and whose return we await.

This is why fasting can include both joy and yearning. We know Christ, yet we still ache for the fullness of His kingdom. We have tasted His goodness, yet we pray for the day when all things are made new.

Our hunger becomes a small reminder of a greater desire: **Come, Lord Jesus.**

VOICES THROUGH THE AGES

Egeria 4TH CENTURY

Egeria, a woman pilgrim in the late 300s, wrote home describing how the whole church in Jerusalem kept an eight-week fast before Easter. Some ate only on weekends. Their hunger had a direction: they were waiting together for the feast of the risen Lord.

Further reading: The Pilgrimage of Egeria, on Lent in Jerusalem

REFLECT

Has my desire for what Jesus can do crowded out my desire for Jesus Himself?

CORPORATE PRAYER

Lord Jesus, awaken our love for You. We thank You for Your presence by the Holy Spirit, and we long for the fullness of Your kingdom. Meet those who are waiting for answers, and keep our hope alive as we wait for You. Amen.

TODAY'S PRACTICE

Pray the simple prayer "Come, Lord Jesus" at several points today, connecting it to a specific need for His kingdom to be seen.

CARRY THIS WITH YOU

Our fasting is marked not only by what we lack, but by Whom we long for.

MY PRAYER TODAY

◯ I read and prayed Day 9. One word for today: _____

Be Still in the Storm

Stillness is trust in God's rule, not pretending trouble is absent.

READ FIRST · OPEN YOUR BIBLE TO

Psalm 46:1–11

"Be still, and know that I am God" is often treated as an invitation to find a quiet room. Quiet can help, but Psalm 46 is not describing a peaceful landscape. Mountains are shaking, waters are roaring, and nations are in turmoil.

The command to be still arrives **in the middle of upheaval**.

The psalm's repeated assurance is that the Lord of hosts is with His people. Stillness, then, is not the absence of external noise. It is the decision to stop treating chaos as though it has ultimate authority.

Some of us are fasting while carrying decisions that cannot wait, relationships that remain strained, or circumstances we cannot control. We do not need to minimize those things.

We can name them truthfully and then remember who is God.

> Faith does not require us to deny the storm. It invites us to locate our refuge within it.

VOICES THROUGH THE AGES

Augustine 5TH CENTURY

Augustine's Latin Bible rendered Be still as something closer to make room or be free. To him, stillness meant clearing space in a crowded heart so God could be seen as God. That is much of what fasting does: it makes room.

Further reading: Expositions on the Psalms, Psalm 46 (45 in his numbering)

REFLECT

What circumstance has been occupying the place of ultimate authority in my thoughts?

CORPORATE PRAYER

God, our refuge and strength, steady us in uncertain times. Bring peace to anxious hearts, wisdom to overwhelmed families, and protection to those in danger. Teach us to trust Your presence when circumstances are loud. Amen.

TODAY'S PRACTICE

Silence notifications for five minutes. Read Psalm 46 slowly and name one burden you are entrusting to God.

CARRY THIS WITH YOU

Stillness is possible because God remains God when the world is shaking.

MY PRAYER TODAY

◯ I read and prayed Day 10. One word for today: _____

Teach Us to Pray

Jesus teaches us both what to ask and whom to trust.

READ FIRST · OPEN YOUR BIBLE TO

Luke 11:1–13

The disciples watched Jesus teach, heal, and confront evil. Yet Luke records them asking, "Lord, teach us to pray." They had noticed that His public ministry was sustained by a life of communion with the Father.

Jesus responds with a prayer that begins not with our needs but with **our Father and His name**. Then He teaches us to ask for daily bread, forgiveness, and protection.

Here is the insight: **Jesus does not force us to choose between God's glory and our ordinary needs.** He places them in the same prayer, in the right relationship.

Afterward, He teaches persistence and describes the Father's goodness. In Luke's account, the teaching culminates in the Father's gift of the Holy Spirit.

We can bring daily concerns to God without making them the center of everything. And we can seek His kingdom without pretending we have no needs.

Prayer teaches us to want what the Father wants while trusting Him with what we need.

VOICES THROUGH THE AGES

Maximus the Confessor 7TH CENTURY

Maximus the Confessor noticed that Jesus teaches us to ask for bread for this day. We ask for what today requires and no more, he explained, so that we do not load the coming years with worry and forget that our lives are in God's hands.

Further reading: Commentary on the Lord's Prayer

REFLECT

Which part of the Lord's Prayer most challenges the way I usually pray?

CORPORATE PRAYER

Our Father, may Your name be honored among us and Your kingdom come. Give us what we need, forgive us as we forgive, and guard us from temptation. Fill us afresh with Your Holy Spirit and teach us to pray as Your children. Amen.

TODAY'S PRACTICE

Pray through the Lord's Prayer slowly, pausing after each petition to name a related need in the church.

CARRY THIS WITH YOU

Prayer orders our desires without silencing our needs.

MY PRAYER TODAY

◯ I read and prayed Day 11. One word for today: _____

Help in Our Weakness

The Spirit is present even when words fail.

READ FIRST · OPEN YOUR BIBLE TO

Romans 8:18–27

Romans 8 describes a world groaning for redemption. Creation groans. Believers groan. And then Paul tells us something deeply comforting: **the Spirit helps us in our weakness.**

He does not say the Spirit helps only when we have the right words, enough confidence, or a clear understanding of the situation. In fact, Paul says we do not know how to pray as we should.

That admission comes from an apostle. It should free the rest of us from pretending we always know what to ask.

Sometimes the need is obvious but the way forward is not. Sometimes grief leaves us speechless. Sometimes we are believing God for a breakthrough but cannot imagine how it might come.

The Spirit's intercession means our limitations do not leave us alone in prayer.

> We do not have to master prayer before we can be helped by the One who teaches us to pray.

VOICES THROUGH THE AGES

Julian of Norwich 14TH CENTURY

Julian of Norwich, an English anchoress, once prayed at a time when she felt no desire to pray at all. She came to understand that Christ Himself is *the ground of our beseeching*. Our longing to pray begins in Him, so even weak and wordless prayer is held and welcomed.

Further reading: Revelations of Divine Love, chapter 41

REFLECT

Where do I need to acknowledge that I do not know how to pray, and welcome the Spirit's help?

CORPORATE PRAYER

Holy Spirit, help us in our weakness. Intercede as we bring needs too heavy or complex for our words. Comfort those who grieve, strengthen those who wait, and align our prayers with the Father's purposes. Amen.

TODAY'S PRACTICE

Sit with one difficult prayer request for a few minutes. Resist rushing to fill the silence; ask the Spirit to help you pray faithfully.

CARRY THIS WITH YOU

Wordless need is not prayerless need.

MY PRAYER TODAY

◯ I read and prayed Day 12. One word for today: _____

While They Worshiped

Direction emerges in the life of a worshiping community.

READ FIRST · OPEN YOUR BIBLE TO

Acts 13:1–3

Acts 13 opens with a church gathered in worship and fasting. Then the Holy Spirit directs them to set apart Barnabas and Saul for a particular work.

What is easy to overlook is that **the church was ministering to the Lord before it received a ministry assignment**.

Their worship was not simply a technique for obtaining instructions. It was already a fitting response to God. In that setting, the Spirit gave direction that would change the course of their mission.

Notice also that the church did not treat the direction as a private achievement. They continued in fasting and prayer, laid hands on the two men, and sent them.

Spirit-led direction belongs within worship, prayer, and the shared life of the Church.

As we seek God this month, we can expect Him to guide us. But we do not have to manufacture a message every time we become quiet. Our first calling is to worship faithfully and remain responsive when He directs.

VOICES THROUGH THE AGES

John Chrysostom 4TH CENTURY

John Chrysostom observed that the church at Antioch was already worshiping and fasting before any assignment came. The sending of Barnabas and Saul grew out of that life of devotion, and the church sent them with more prayer and fasting.

Further reading: Homilies on Acts, on 13:1–3

REFLECT

Am I willing to worship and obey even when I do not receive an immediate new direction?

CORPORATE PRAYER

Holy Spirit, make us a worshiping and listening church. Give us wisdom for the decisions before us and courage to obey what You make clear. Guide our leaders, families, and ministries for the sake of Christ's mission. Amen.

TODAY'S PRACTICE

Pray for COTLE's leaders and ministries. Ask for discernment and faithful obedience, not merely new ideas.

CARRY THIS WITH YOU

Worship is not a strategy to obtain direction; it is the setting of a responsive life.

MY PRAYER TODAY

◯ I read and prayed Day 13. One word for today: _____

Discern What Is Good

Love must grow in knowledge and discernment.

READ FIRST · OPEN YOUR BIBLE TO

Philippians 1:9–11

Paul prays that the Philippians' love will abound more and more. We might expect him to stop there. Who could object to more love?

But Paul adds something important: **knowledge and all discernment**. His prayer is that love will become wise enough to recognize what is excellent.

This means discernment is not simply the ability to identify what is wrong. It is the Spirit-shaped capacity to recognize what is better and to act accordingly.

We often ask God for an answer to a decision. Paul teaches us to ask for the kind of mature love that can weigh the decision well.

That matters in our families, finances, relationships, and service. An opportunity may be appealing without being timely. A response may be understandable without being loving. A good desire may still need wisdom.

As we fast, we are not only seeking information about what to do next. We are asking God to form people who can recognize and choose what pleases Him.

VOICES THROUGH THE AGES

John Cassian 5TH CENTURY

John Cassian describes discernment as vital to the spiritual life because even apparently good practices can become distorted without wisdom.

Further reading: Conferences, Conference II

REFLECT

Where do I need not just an answer, but greater discernment about what is excellent?

CORPORATE PRAYER

Father, cause our love to abound with knowledge and discernment. Keep us from confusing impulse with wisdom or intensity with Your guidance. Form in us the character of Christ and direct our steps in truth. Amen.

TODAY'S PRACTICE

Before making one significant decision, ask: What is loving? What is true? What is wise? Whose counsel should I seek?

CARRY THIS WITH YOU

Mature love does not merely feel deeply; it learns to judge wisely.

MY PRAYER TODAY

◯ I read and prayed Day 14. One word for today: _____

When You Don't Know What to Do

Dependence and expectation in overwhelming circumstances.

READ FIRST · OPEN YOUR BIBLE TO

2 Chronicles 20:1–22

Jehoshaphat faced an approaching army that Judah could not defeat by ordinary means. He proclaimed a fast, and the people gathered to seek the Lord.

At the center of his prayer is a confession many of us know well: **"We do not know what to do, but our eyes are on You"** (2 Chronicles 20:12).

Notice that uncertainty and faith stand together in the same sentence. Jehoshaphat does not pretend to possess a strategy. He directs the people's attention to the God who does.

The Lord's response comes through a prophetic word, and the people respond with worship and obedience. The text does not present fasting as a lever that forced victory. It shows a community that brought its helplessness before God and acted on His word.

There are situations we cannot fix through greater effort. We can acknowledge that without surrendering hope.

> Not knowing what to do does not mean we have nowhere to turn.

VOICES THROUGH THE AGES

Amma Theodora 4TH CENTURY

A story from the desert mothers, credited to Amma Theodora, tells of demons who admit that fasting and long vigils do not drive them away; only humility does. When we cannot fix what is in front of us, humble dependence is not defeat. It is strength.

Further reading: Sayings of the Desert Fathers (attribution to verify)

REFLECT

Where have I confused the absence of a strategy with the absence of hope?

CORPORATE PRAYER

Lord, our eyes are on You. We bring battles too large for our strength: illness, broken relationships, financial pressure, and burdens carried by families in our church. Give us wisdom, courage, and deliverance according to Your goodness. Amen.

TODAY'S PRACTICE

Pray specifically over a need that feels overwhelming. If possible, join others in praying for the requests at the altar.

CARRY THIS WITH YOU

We can be honest about our limits and confident in God's power.

MY PRAYER TODAY

◯ I read and prayed Day 15. One word for today: _____

We Sought Our God

Asking for protection is an expression of dependence.

READ FIRST · OPEN YOUR BIBLE TO

Ezra 8:21–23

Ezra was preparing to lead a vulnerable group on a dangerous journey. They had families, possessions, and a long road ahead. He proclaimed a fast so the people could humble themselves and seek from God a safe journey.

The detail worth noticing is how specific their prayer was. **They did not simply ask God to bless them in general. They asked for protection on an actual road.**

Sometimes we think mature prayer should be abstract or detached from practical concerns. Ezra shows us otherwise. Faith can name a real danger and ask for real help.

The account says God heard their entreaty. That is a testimony of divine care, not a promise that every journey will be free of hardship.

What are the roads before you right now? A medical appointment, a family transition, a difficult conversation, a financial decision, a new assignment?

Bring the details before God. He is not too great to care about the particular things you are carrying.

VOICES THROUGH THE AGES

Amanda Berry Smith 1837–1915

Amanda Berry Smith was born into slavery and became an evangelist on four continents. She came to faith after a season of fasting and earnest prayer, and through years of hardship she learned to bring every detail of her day plainly before God.

Further reading: An Autobiography (1893)

REFLECT

What specific need have I been reluctant to bring plainly before God?

CORPORATE PRAYER

Father, we seek Your protection over our households and our journeys. Guard those traveling, provide for those making difficult transitions, and give wisdom to those facing uncertain decisions. Hear the specific requests placed before You by our church family. Amen.

TODAY'S PRACTICE

Write one clear, specific prayer request. Pray it without apology, then ask God for the wisdom to take the next faithful step.

CARRY THIS WITH YOU

Specific needs belong in the presence of a faithful God.

MY PRAYER TODAY

◯ I read and prayed Day 16. One word for today: _____

The Church Was Praying

Corporate prayer means no one carries a burden alone.

READ FIRST · OPEN YOUR BIBLE TO

Acts 12:1–17

Peter was imprisoned, and Acts tells us the church was praying earnestly for him. That sentence is easy to read quickly, but consider what it means: **while Peter was confined, the church was not powerless.**

They could not open the prison doors themselves. They could gather, seek God, and refuse to leave Peter's burden to Peter alone.

Then the story takes an almost humorous turn. When Peter arrives at the house, the praying community struggles to believe he is actually at the door. Their imperfect expectations do not erase the reality of God's intervention.

Corporate prayer is not a gathering of people who always feel certain. It is the shared act of bringing needs to God together.

That is why our altar matters during these 21 days. Every request represents a person or a household. When we pray over those requests, we say through our actions: **You are not carrying this alone.**

VOICES THROUGH THE AGES

Cyprian of Carthage 3RD CENTURY

Cyprian of Carthage noticed that Jesus did not teach us to pray My Father but Our Father. Our prayer is shared, he taught: when one believer prays, the whole people of God are praying together.

Further reading: On the Lord's Prayer

REFLECT

Whose burden could I help carry in prayer instead of simply saying, “I'll pray for you”?

CORPORATE PRAYER

Father, make us a church that prays earnestly for one another. Remember those who feel trapped, isolated, or afraid. Bring freedom where there is bondage, hope where there is despair, and strength where people are weary. Unite us in love and intercession. Amen.

TODAY’S PRACTICE

Pray over at least one request that is not your own. If you know the person, consider offering appropriate encouragement without promising a particular outcome.

CARRY THIS WITH YOU

When one person is burdened, the church can stand with them in prayer.

MY PRAYER TODAY

◯ I read and prayed Day 17. One word for today: _____

Keep Asking

Persistence rests on the Father's goodness.

READ FIRST · OPEN YOUR BIBLE TO

Matthew 7:7–11

Jesus tells His disciples to ask, seek, and knock. These are active words. He does not teach us to stop praying the moment an answer is delayed.

But notice how He explains the invitation. He talks about a father giving good gifts to his children. **The reason to keep asking is not that repetition wears God down. It is that the Father is good.**

That distinction matters when we have prayed for something for months or years. Persistence is not a way of overcoming divine reluctance. It is a way of remaining in relationship while we continue to seek His help.

Jesus' teaching also guards us from treating every desired outcome as automatically good. The Father knows how to give good gifts, even when our understanding is limited.

So keep praying for the healing, reconciliation, provision, and open door you need. Ask boldly. Seek faithfully. Knock persistently.

And entrust the answer to the Father whose goodness exceeds our perspective.

VOICES THROUGH THE AGES

Augustine 5TH CENTURY

Writing to a widow named Proba, Augustine took up the question of why we should pray if God already knows what we need. His answer: asking does not inform God. It stretches our desire, so that we become able to receive what He is preparing to give.

Further reading: Letter 130, to Proba

REFLECT

Has a delayed answer made me question whether God welcomes my prayers?

CORPORATE PRAYER

Good Father, teach us to persevere without fear or manipulation. We continue asking for healing, restoration, salvation, provision, and wisdom. Strengthen those who have waited a long time, and keep our confidence rooted in Your love. Amen.

TODAY'S PRACTICE

Return to one long-standing prayer request. Pray it again, and thank God that He welcomes your asking.

CARRY THIS WITH YOU

We persist not to wear God down, but because we trust His goodness.

MY PRAYER TODAY

◯ I read and prayed Day 18. One word for today: _____

Call the Elders

The church's response to suffering includes prayer for healing.

READ FIRST · OPEN YOUR BIBLE TO

James 5:13–18

James asks a series of practical questions: Is anyone suffering? Is anyone cheerful? Is anyone sick? Each situation calls for a fitting response: prayer, praise, or calling the elders to pray.

The surprising insight is that **James does not treat sickness as a private spiritual problem someone must manage alone.** He tells the sick person to involve the praying community.

The elders pray in the name of the Lord, and the passage directs our attention to the Lord who raises up and restores. Prayer for healing is not an embarrassment to Christian faith. It belongs within the ordinary life of the Church.

We pray with expectancy, while refusing to blame someone for a delayed or unexpected outcome. The same church that prays for healing must also accompany people through treatment, uncertainty, and suffering.

If you need prayer, you do not have to carry that need silently. If someone else is suffering, do not offer prayer as a substitute for love. Let prayer move you toward them.

VOICES THROUGH THE AGES

Macrina the Younger 4TH CENTURY

Macrina, the eldest sister of Basil the Great, led a praying community of women. After her death, the sisters told her brother Gregory of healings that came through her prayers. In her household, prayer for the sick was simply part of shared life.

Further reading: Gregory of Nyssa, Life of Macrina

REFLECT

Where do I need to invite trusted believers to pray with me, or stand alongside someone who is suffering?

CORPORATE PRAYER

Lord Jesus, we ask for Your healing power among us. Strengthen those facing illness, chronic pain, emotional distress, and difficult diagnoses. Give wisdom to medical professionals and caregivers. Surround every suffering person with love, hope, and faithful companionship. Amen.

TODAY'S PRACTICE

Ask for prayer if you need it, or contact someone who is ill to offer prayer and a practical expression of care.

CARRY THIS WITH YOU

Healing prayer belongs to a church that stays close to people who suffer.

MY PRAYER TODAY

◯ I read and prayed Day 19. One word for today: _____

Light That Breaks Forth

God's promised flourishing is larger than personal gain.

READ FIRST · OPEN YOUR BIBLE TO

Isaiah 58:6–12

We began these 21 days hearing Isaiah's warning that fasting cannot be separated from justice and mercy. Now return to the same chapter and listen to its promises.

Isaiah speaks of light breaking forth, healing, guidance, strength, and ruined places being rebuilt. The language is expansive. God is concerned with restoration.

But notice the shape of that restoration: **the people who seek healing are also called to become repairers of what is broken around them.**

The chapter does not portray prosperity as merely having more for ourselves. It imagines a community made whole enough to extend God's care to others.

This is a rich picture of flourishing. We can believe God for provision and healing without reducing His blessing to private accumulation. We can pray for our households to prosper and ask that their flourishing become a blessing to neighbors and generations.

As we near the end of this fast, keep expecting God to move. And ask how the restoration you seek might become part of His restoration through you.

VOICES THROUGH THE AGES

Basil the Great 4TH CENTURY

Basil's teaching on wealth and care for the poor challenges Christians to understand provision as responsibility as well as gift.

Further reading: Basil, Homily to the Rich and related sermons

REFLECT

If God brings the breakthrough I am asking for, how could that blessing extend beyond me?

CORPORATE PRAYER

Lord, let Your light break forth among us. Restore what is broken, provide for households in need, and strengthen those who are weary. Make us generous with what You entrust to us, and use our lives to repair what has been damaged in our community. Amen.

TODAY'S PRACTICE

Pray for one area of needed breakthrough and identify one concrete way you can participate in someone else's flourishing.

CARRY THIS WITH YOU

God's restoration is meant to reach through us, not stop with us.

MY PRAYER TODAY

◯ I read and prayed Day 20. One word for today: _____

Beyond Day Twenty-One

The point of a fast is a life that continues in the Spirit.

READ FIRST · OPEN YOUR BIBLE TO

Galatians 5:16–25

Paul tells believers to walk by the Spirit. Then, after describing the fruit of the Spirit, he says, **"If we live by the Spirit, let us also walk by the Spirit."**

That is a fitting word for the final day. The Spirit is not only the One who meets us in extraordinary moments. He is the One who leads us in ordinary steps.

For 21 days, we have adjusted routines, made space for prayer, carried requests together, and asked God for breakthrough. But the measure of this season is not whether we can check every box or report a dramatic story by tonight.

The deeper question is what we will continue to practice tomorrow.

Perhaps God has answered a prayer in a way you can name. Give thanks. Perhaps you are still waiting. Keep praying. Perhaps He has exposed a habit that needs to change or awakened a new love for His presence. Respond faithfully.

> The fast has an ending. A Spirit-led life does not.

VOICES THROUGH THE AGES

Maria Woodworth-Etter 1844–1924

Maria Woodworth-Etter spent some forty years preaching revival and praying for the sick across America. Often called a grandmother of the Pentecostal movement, she shows what it looks like to keep walking in the Spirit long after the first fire.

Further reading: Acts of the Holy Ghost (her autobiography)

REFLECT

What one practice or change will I carry into the weeks after this fast?

CORPORATE PRAYER

Holy Spirit, thank You for sustaining us through these 21 days. We give thanks for every answer and continue to entrust every unanswered request to the Father's care. Grow Your fruit in us. Keep us attentive, generous, courageous, and faithful as we walk together beyond this season. In Jesus' name, amen.

TODAY'S PRACTICE

Choose one sustainable rhythm to continue. Pray for the requests at the altar once more, giving thanks and entrusting every person to God's care.

CARRY THIS WITH YOU

Day 22 is not the end of what God is forming in us.

MY PRAYER TODAY

◯ I read and prayed Day 21. One word for today: _____

CLOSING SUNDAY · SUN, JAN 31

Beyond Day Twenty-One

The fast has an ending. A Spirit-led life does not.

Today we gather as a church to give thanks for every answer and to keep entrusting every unanswered request to the Father's care.

REFLECT

What one practice will you carry into the weeks ahead?

CARRY THIS WITH YOU

Day 22 is not the end of what God is forming in us.

MY NOTES

Notes

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