

Erickson Covenant Church Day of Fasting & Prayer

Ash Wednesday, First Day of Lent

February 17, 2021

Welcome, Covenanters, to our day of fasting and prayer. We are glad you are participating today.

What is fasting? Our friends from Renovare offer this helpful definition: *"Fasting is the voluntary denial of an otherwise normal function for the sake of intense spiritual activity. The focus of biblical fasting is always on spiritual purposes. The heart of one who is fasting is to seek God, most often privately and with no motive to gain approval from people. Fasting provides the opportunity to reveal those things that control us. It reminds us that we are sustained by every word of God and it restores balance in a believer's life regarding priorities and nonessentials."*

Our hope is that this will be a day in which we, as a church body, seek God and listen to the Spirit, being sustained by his life-giving Word.

In order to facilitate that, we are going to follow a very simple liturgy: The Lord's Prayer. We are inviting you take a phrase at a time, throughout the day, allowing the Spirit both to speak to you and to guide your speaking back to the Father.

There will also be two times to gather online--we encourage you to join if at all possible. You may want to set a reminder in your phone or print this off so you can refer to it throughout the day.

A few overarching instructions may be helpful.

- For each prayer phrase, invite the Holy Spirit to speak to you. You could pray, "Holy Spirit, I am listening. Help me to hear you and to respond to you." Then take the phrase for those hours, prayerfully repeating and mulling them as you go about your daily work.
- When you feel hungry or irritable or strange, name that feeling and then use it to refocus on the prayer phrase of those hours. Fasting can raise a lot of internal questions, feelings, and pressures--open yourself up to the Spirit's work through this process.
- This guide is meant to help you, not hinder you. If the Spirit leads you in a different direction or calls you to remain in a certain place, follow him.

Our Prayer Guide For the Day

Opening Morning Prayer Focus

- Begin by committing this day of fasting and prayer to the Lord, inviting the Holy Spirit to fill us and lead us today. Taking a few moments of stillness to listen to the Spirit through his Word. If you follow a Bible reading plan, use that; alternatively, you could read Psalm 139, John 15, or Romans 8.
- Now pray the first prayer focus of our day: ***Our Father, who is in heaven, hallowed be your name.***
 - Repeat this a few times, pausing between to simply listen and receive.
 - Give praise to our Father for who he is. Focus your heart in adoration and worship upon him.
 - Prayerfully consider all the places in your life and in our world where you want to see God's Name Revered as Holy
 - And now, committing this day of fasting to the Lord, carry this prayer phrase through the opening hours of the day. Repeat it in your mind, or out loud, allowing the Spirit to work it deep into your heart and prayer.

Mid-Morning Prayer Focus (10am)

- Find a few moments to simply pause and re-focus your heart and mind. Breathe in and out, 3-4 times, and then pray the next phrase of the Lord's Prayer: ***Your kingdom come, your will be done, on earth as it is in heaven.***
- Again, repeat this phrase a few times until it sinks down deep.
- As you pray this prayer, let the Spirit guide your mind and heart to the people and places "on earth" where God's kingdom of love and grace need to come in power.

Mid-Day Prayer Focus (12:15pm)

- Our third prayer phrase is ***Give us this day our daily bread.*** As we are fasting, this connects in an interesting way. Take this prayer phrase as an opportunity to reflect on the truth Jesus quoted during his 40 day fast: "Man shall not live on bread alone, but on every word that comes from the mouth of God." (Matt. 4:4; Deut. 8:3)
- If possible, please join us on Zoom **or** Facebook Live at 12:15p (both links are in the email). Tom will be leading us in a reflection on what nourishes Jesus from John 4. If you are unable to join us, read John 4:34 and let the Holy Spirit ask you

these reflection questions: *In what way was doing God's will nourishing for Jesus? How is doing God's will nourishing for us?*

- Carry this prayer phrase *Give us this day our daily bread* throughout your early afternoon.

Mid-Afternoon Prayer Focus (3pm)

- Our fourth prayer focus leads us both inward and outward: ***Forgive us our trespasses, as we forgive those who trespass against us.***
- Let the Holy Spirit lead you over the next few hours, both to receive Jesus' unconditional forgiveness as you confess your sins to him (1 John 1:9), and to offer forgiveness to others you've been resisting or refusing to forgive.
- You may need to reach out and relay that, as appropriate. Follow the leading of the Spirit.

Late-Afternoon Prayer Focus (5pm)

- The final portion of the Lord's Prayer is: *Lead us not into temptation, but deliver us from evil.*
- As you pray this prayer, consider your own trials and temptations and receive God's grace and strength.
- Consider also the many places and people who are suffering from or perpetrating evil and injustice in the world, asking for God's deliverance for them.

Early Evening Online Gathering for Worship and Prayer (6:30pm)

- Join us over Zoom as we reflect, worship and pray together.
- We will be lead by Pastor Tom, and Peter Hambrey will be offering us a reflection on the Fasting and Temptation of Jesus.

Closing the Day (as you are getting ready to go to bed)

- Pray the Lord's Prayer slowly and meditatively. Don't rush it; savour it, repeating it a few times.
- Now, let the Spirit guide you through these reflection questions on the day (it's called an Examen). We encourage you to write down your answers for yourself.
 - Where did you experience joy today?
 - When did you experience sorrow today?
 - What stood out to you the most from this day of fasting and prayer?
 - What is the Holy Spirit saying to you?
 - Is there something God wants us to hear as a church?

Closing the Day Prayer: Wednesday Compline from the Northumbria Community

**Calm me, O Lord, as You stilled the storm.
Still me, O Lord, keep me from harm.
Let all the tumult within me cease.
Enfold me, Lord, in Your peace.**

Father, bless the work that is done, and the work that is to be.
Father, bless the servant that I am, and the servant that I will be.

Thou Lord and God of power, shield and sustain me this night.

**I will lie down this night with God, and God will lie down with me;
I will lie down this night with Christ, and Christ will lie down with me;
I will lie down this night with the Spirit, and the Spirit will lie down with me;
God and Christ and the Spirit, be lying down with me.**

The peace of God be over me to shelter me, under me to uphold me, about me to protect me, behind me to direct me, ever with me to save me.

The peace of all peace be mine this night, in the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Spirit. Amen.

Breaking Your Fast Prayer (the next morning)

- As you break your fast, we encourage you to 1) thank the Father for the gifts we received during our fast, 2) hold up your brothers and sisters in Erickson Covenant, asking the Holy Spirit to continue to speak and lead us, and 3) ask the Spirit to lead you this post-fasting day as you continue to listen to his leading and do his will. Grace and peace to you.