

ALL CHURCH FAST

[WHY ARE WE PRAYING AND FASTING?]

In Acts 13:2-3, we read, “While they (Church Elders) were worshiping the Lord and fasting, the Holy Spirit said, “Set apart for me Barnabas and Saul for the work to which I have called them.” So, after they had fasted and prayed, they placed their hands on them and sent them off.”

The early Church discerned its next steps when it sought God’s will through prayer and fasting. In Church history, spiritual awakenings and Christ-centered revivals have come to regions where God’s people have gathered for prayer and fasting.

It is our desire that this would be true of The Bridge Community Church in this season in its story. We long to see the expansion of God’s kingdom through the unique vision He has entrusted to us as a Church. This 3-day prayer and fasting guide is designed to help us pursue that goal.

As you pray each day, listen for the Holy Spirit to speak and keep your heart open to what He has to say. Journal as much as you can and confess your struggles and doubts should the Father bring up any issues in your life (1 John 1:9).

Most of all, BELIEVE that in response to your prayers, God is about to do immeasurably more than all you could ask or imagine here at and through The Bridge Community Church

[BUT I’VE NEVER FASTED. WHAT AM I DOING?]

“Fasting in the biblical sense is choosing not to partake of food because your spiritual hunger is so deep, your determination in intercession so intense, or your spiritual warfare so demanding that you have temporarily set aside even fleshly needs to give yourself to prayer and meditation.” - Wesley L. Duewel

Fasting is an intentional abstention from food (or any craving) for a set period of time to seek God’s will through prayer. Through fasting and prayer, we humble ourselves before God so the Holy Spirit will stir our souls, awaken our Church, strengthen our families, and draw our communities to saving faith in Jesus Christ.

This may be the first time some of you are participating in the Christian discipline of fasting and we want this to be a positive, life changing experience. We have therefore proposed several different levels at which you can participate. You can read about these options below. However, we would like for as many people as possible to try the three day challenge.

FASTING FOR BEGINNERS LEVEL: This is a great option if you have never abstained from food for lengthy periods or if you wish to refocus certain areas of your life that are out of balance. For example, you might choose to stop using social media or watching television for a set duration during the fast and then carefully bring that element back into your life in healthy doses at the conclusion of the fast.

You can choose not to view any media from 6:00 pm to midnight and spend that time praying at the top of each hour. You can also skip one meal each day and spend that mealtime praying at the top of each hour. So, if you skip breakfast and you get up at 6:00 am, you can pray once at 7am, 8am, 9am, 10am, 11am, and wrap it up at noon.

FASTING FOR INTERMEDIATE LEVEL: You can do what's known as the Daniel fast. The Daniel Fast eating plan is like a vegan diet with more restrictions. The only beverage is water and the primary foods are fruits, vegetables, whole grains and legumes. There are no sweeteners on the fast and no processed foods or chemicals. During this fast, set aside four times during the day to pray: 9:00a.m, 12:00noon, 3:00p.m, and 6:00p.m. If you are an early riser, add a 6:00a.m prayer time.

FASTING FOR ADVANCED LEVEL: In this type of fast, you drink only liquids, typically water with light juices as an option during the duration of the fast. Certain medical conditions do not allow for some to engage in a food fast. If you have health concerns, seek the advice of a physician before fasting from food. Before fasting, you may be tempted to eat a large meal to stock up. This can have some negative effects on your body. It is best to wean yourself from food. Make your last meal before the fast a light meal consisting of fruits and vegetables. Stay away from greasy or oily foods. When breaking your fast, do so slowly. If engaging in an extended fast, ease your body back into a normal pattern by eating a light diet consisting mostly of fruits and vegetables. After a few days, you can begin to eat meat again.

[The 3 Day Challenge]

This year we are also adding the three-day challenge. This three-day fast begins at sundown on Sunday night and ends after Sing Night on Wednesday night. There are options to pray with the church at the church on Monday, Tuesday, Wednesday in the morning and the evening. These prayer times are as follows

Morning Prayer: 6:30 am – 7:30am at Leadington or Bonne Terre (Monday, Tuesday, Wednesday)

Evening Prayer: 6:30pm – 7:30pm at Leadington or Bonne Terre (Monday, Tuesday), @ Bonne Terre only Wednesday for all-church Sing Night

[WHAT WILL YOUR PERSONAL FAST BE]

- My fasting plan

- What I hope to gain

- Ways that I am personally praying

Day 1: [Monday] We Must Pray

- Prayer is an open door to connect to the heart of God.
- If we want to see something impossible come to be, we must pray.
- If we want to gain wisdom or direction, we must pray.
- If we want more of His presence, we must pray.

As Dane Ortlund says in the foreword of *A Praying church*, “*The battle to pray is not mainly a battle against prayerlessness but a battle against discouragement, cynicism, and unbelief.*”

We desire to see God’s glory. We desire to be a part of impacting the world for God’s glory. We desire to experience the Holy Spirit and his power.

So, we must pray.

Be Still and Wait

As you begin to settle into your time of prayer, don’t rush into it.

Be still before the Lord. (Psalm 46:10)

Wait on Him.

You may want to say a short prayer of anticipation, such as: “*Come, Holy Spirit.*” And then simply sit in His presence for a few minutes.

Listen for His Heart

As you wait on the Lord, He will begin to stir your heart. God wants you to pray according to His will and in alignment with His heart.

But initially, you may not know what to pray.

As you begin to experience Him in your prayer time, the Holy Spirit will prompt you to pray certain things.

In Romans 8, Paul tells us:

“The Spirit helps us in our weakness. For we do not know what to pray for as we ought, but the Spirit himself intercedes for us with groanings too deep for words. And he who searches hearts knows what is the mind of the Spirit, because the Spirit intercedes for the saints according to the will of God.” (Romans 8:26-27, ESV)

When the Spirit guides you to pray something, follow His lead.

Pray Like They Did in Acts

As you get deeper into your time of prayer, ask God for the following supernatural requests as He leads you.

You may want to look up the associated scriptures to fuel your prayer with Biblical language and zeal.

1. God, fill me with your Holy Spirit. (Acts 2:1-4, Acts 4:31, Acts 10:44-48)

You can be filled with God's Spirit, but you can't create this movement for yourself. You can only put yourself in a posture to receive. Empty yourself before God and ask Him for a fresh filling.

2. God, fill us (Your church) with your Holy Spirit. (Acts 2:1-4, Acts 4:31, Acts 10:44-48)

In Acts 4, it says that they were "*all filled with the Holy Spirit.*" While God's filling comes in a very personal way, He also will fill groups of people with His Holy Spirit.

All can be filled, even today, even now. We must ask.

3. God, graciously give us deep Christian fellowship in our church. (Acts 2:42-47, Acts 4:32-37)

The believers in Acts were united in Jesus. They shared their money, time, possessions. They shared their entire lives—even the deeper places of their soul (1 John 1:7).

And this unity and Christian community was birthed through the power of the Spirit (Ephesians 4:3-6).

4. God, do signs and wonders among us to show Yourself to us and to a needy world. (Acts 4:30-31)

There should be unmistakable signs of God's presence moving in our church. ALL THE TIME. There should be evidence of His activity. Moves of His Spirit.

- Power.
- Healing.
- Life-change.
- Freedom.
- Joy.
- Transformation.
- God, just as you revealed Yourself in Acts, we ask You to do it again here.

5. God, give me boldness to speak about You. (Acts 4:29-31)

We are not praying these prayers for our selfish gain (James 4:3). Our desire, in praying for these things, is that God would get glory in our church and in this city.

In Acts 4, the believers prayed that God would “*grant to your servants to continue to speak your word with all boldness, while you stretch out your hand to heal, and sign and wonders are performed through the name of your holy servant Jesus*” (Acts 4:29b-30).

Give us boldness to share about You, God, for your glory.

Three Days of Prayer

Prayer is the lifeblood of the Church because, by it, we access the very Presence of God. Join us this week as we ask God for more outpouring of His Holy Spirit.

God meets us where we are, so we encourage you to pray where you are during this week – at home, in nature, a quiet break room in the office or even just in your parked car. Find a place where you can give Him your undivided attention, free from distractions.

And join us for morning and evening prayer.

Morning Prayer: 6:30 am – 7:30am at Leasington or Bonne Terre (Monday, Tuesday, Wednesday)

Evening Prayer: 6:30pm – 7:30pm at Leasington or Bonne Terre (Monday, Tuesday), @ Bonne Terre only Wednesday for all-church Sing Night

Day 2: [Tuesday] Protection, Provision & Power

BE STILL AND WAIT

Take a moment to pray and ask the Holy Spirit to speak to you this morning. Be still before the Lord. (Psalm 46:10) Wait on Him.

LISTEN FOR HIS HEART

Finally, be strong in the Lord and in the strength of his might. Put on the whole armor of God, that you may be able to stand against the schemes of the devil. For we do not wrestle against flesh and blood, but against the rulers, against the authorities, against the cosmic powers over this present darkness, against the spiritual forces of evil in the heavenly places. Therefore, take up the whole armor of God, that you may be able to withstand in the evil day, and having done all, to stand firm. (Ephesians 6:10–13, ESV)

Use the Bible app, google search, or your preferred search method. See how many verses you can find about God's protection. Jot down ways in which the Lord has already provided for you personally and also ways you are still praying he will provide.

Please visit <https://www.advancemovement.com/find-a-church/> and view our partner churches. Pray God's protection, provision, and His power over our Advance partner churches around the globe. When you are finished, proceed to pray for our local congregations in LT and BT for God's protection, provision, and power.

REFLECTION

As we pray for God's protection, it is good to remind ourselves of God's power. He is over-all, and he gets to choose how he answers prayers. We can trust him with the answers because we know he is a good father. And can we just say that God answers in some unconventional ways at times! His ways are beyond our understanding.

For example, He chose to use a prostitute to protect his people. **Rahab's story is found in Joshua chapters 2-6.** Joshua sent two spies to look over the land before they entered the area around Jericho. Rahab housed the spies and gave them insider information. She also

helped them escape, provided that her and her family would be spared during the upcoming battle. They were spared, and Rahab found herself in the lineage of Christ! So, when we are afraid, let's preach the gospel to ourselves and rely on our all-knowing, all-powerful, very good father.

Let's read Psalms 46 again and get it deep into our souls:

46 God is our refuge and strength, a very present[b] help in trouble. 2 Therefore we will not fear though the earth gives way, though the mountains be moved into the heart of the sea, 3 though its waters roar and foam, though the mountains tremble at its swelling. Selah 4 There is a river whose streams make glad the city of God, the holy habitation of the Most High. 5 God is in the midst of her; she shall not be moved; God will help her when morning dawns. 6 The nations rage, the kingdoms totter; he utters his voice, the earth melts. 7 The Lord of hosts is with us; the God of Jacob is our fortress. Selah 8 Come, behold the works of the Lord, how he has brought desolations on the earth. 9 He makes wars cease to the end of the earth; he breaks the bow and shatters the spear; he burns the chariots with fire. 10 "Be still, and know that I am God. I will be exalted among the nations, I will be exalted in the earth!" 11 The Lord of hosts is with us; the God of Jacob is our fortress. Selah

PRAY AT THE CHURCH

Don't forget you can join us for prayer at the church!

Morning Prayer: 6:30 am – 7:30am at Leadington or Bonne Terre (Monday, Tuesday, Wednesday)

Evening Prayer: 630pm – 7:30pm at Leadington or Bonne Terre (Monday, Tuesday), @ Bonne Terre only Wednesday for all-church Sing Night

Day 3: [Wednesday] Renewal

BE STILL AND WAIT

Take a moment to pray and ask the Holy Spirit to speak to you this morning. Be still before the Lord. (Psalm 46:10) Wait on Him.

LISTEN FOR HIS HEART

Hosea 10:12 reads..." I said, '**Plant** the good seeds of righteousness, and you will **harvest** a crop of love. **Plow** up the hard ground of your hearts, for now is the time to seek the Lord, that he may come and **shower** righteousness upon you.'

Think about the specific words from this verse. Pray over them.

- Plant
- Harvest
- Plow
- Shower

These are farming words. These are also renewal words.

- Planting....good seed instead of bad (renewal)
- Harvesting...love instead of hate (renewal)
- Plowing....hard hearts to make them soft (renewal)
- Showering.....righteousness instead of chaos (renewal receiving God's rain)

Where does your heart need renewal?

REFLECTION

In Hosea 10, Israel is described as a healthy vine destroyed by vanity. As God prospered Israel, they took the wealth they received and "poured it on the altars of their foreign gods." Their hearts were fickle, making empty promises and floating from one god to another based on what worked best for them at the time. The sins of the people are compared to seeds that produce poisonous weeds. The people planted wickedness and reaped evil.

To produce a fruitful harvest, a farmer has to plow, plant and water the ground properly. Spiritual renewal works the same way. Hosea 10:12 instructs the people to sow righteousness and break up unplowed ground in order to reap the fruit of God's unfailing love.

To reap the best fruit, we cannot just barely open our heart to God. We must prepare our hearts by completely breaking open the ground around it. Sin forms a thick wall around the heart, and we must actively awaken and engage our hearts to become more like God in order to harvest the best fruit. We must seek the Lord.

Through correction, repentance, and grace, we can break open the unplowed ground and receive the blessings God wants to give us. In farming, time is of the essence. The time to reap the best fruit is now. Let the seed you sow be of the best seed so you waste no time before reaping the best fruit.

RESPONDING:

- Consider the ground in your heart. Is it walled-up with sin? How can you plow the ground to better receive God and all He wants to offer you? "Fallow ground" represents a hard, neglected heart that is resistant to God's influence. Breaking it up requires identifying and addressing areas of hardness, spiritual weeds, or buried hurts through prayer, confession, and repentance.
- What's one way you can humble yourself and allow the Holy Spirit to change your heart and mind? What is one new action you need to take?
- What does renewal look like in your life? The promise is that as you break up the fallow ground, God will come and "rain righteousness upon you". This imagery signifies a refreshing, abundant outpouring of God's goodness and truth, making your life fruitful.

SING NIGHT IS TONIGHT

Join us tonight at the Bridge Bonne Terre as we conclude our fast. We will be singing and praying together with both churches at 6:30pm.