

All church fast

Why do we fast?

By taking our eyes off the things of this world, we can more successfully turn our attention to Christ. Fasting is not a way to get God to do what we want. Fasting changes us, not God. Fasting is not a way to appear more spiritual than others. Fasting is to be done in a spirit of humility and with a joyful attitude. Matthew 6:16-18 declares, "When you fast, do not look somber as the hypocrites do, for they disfigure their faces to show men they are fasting. I tell you the truth, they have received their reward in full. But when you fast, put oil on your head and wash your face, so that it will not be obvious to men that you are fasting, but only to your Father, who is unseen; and your Father, who sees what is done in secret, will reward you."

Fasting options:

Water Only Fast – The water only fast means abstaining from all food and drink with the exception of water. It is the most strict fast we recommend. Some people may also choose to drink black coffee and/or tea.

Juice and/or Broth Fast – The juice and/or broth fast means abstaining from solid food (and shakes, smoothies, etc...) and only consuming liquids like water, juice, and broth. You may choose to limit how much juice/broth you drink to help train your body towards a water only fast.

Intermittent Fast – The intermittent fast means abstaining from food for extended times during the day, and then breaking the fast to eat a small and lite meal. This is a great starting point if you've never fasted before and can help you grow towards a juice or water only fast in the future.

With all dietary fasting, please consult with your doctor if you have concerns or pre-existing health conditions.

Theme:

The theme of our fast this year is “Steadfast...” steadfast in love, steadfast in battle, steadfast in mission.

Main Passage: 2 Thessalonians 3:1-5

Finally, dear brothers and sisters, we ask you to pray for us. Pray that the Lord’s message will spread rapidly and be honored wherever it goes, just as when it came to you. **2** Pray, too, that we will be rescued from wicked and evil people, for not everyone is a believer. **3** But the Lord is faithful; he will strengthen you and guard you from the evil one. **4** And we are confident in the Lord that you are doing and will continue to do the things we commanded you. **5** May the Lord lead your hearts into a full understanding and expression of the love of God and the patient endurance that comes from Christ.

We will meet every night of the fast beginning Monday, 9/22 and end the fast with a potluck and baptisms on Wednesday 9/24

Below is the allocation of meals for the potluck by last name:

A-C: Main

D-F: Veggies or Salad

G-I: Main

J-L: Side

M-O: Veggies or Salad

P-R: Side

S-U: Main

V-Z: Dessert

Day One, Monday 9/22

Steadfast in love – Alan Frow, Southlands Brea

We need to lean in towards the steadfast love of Jesus and ask him for strength and endurance to remain steadfast in following Him. Paul was writing to the church in Thessalonica that was experiencing severe persecution as new believers. The gospel was advancing rapidly across their region but they were experiencing significant opposition at the same time. Paul prays for them that the Lord would direct their hearts to the Love of God and the steadfastness of Christ. Steadfastness is not the same as slowness. He is literally describing the word of the Lord ‘speeding ahead.’ Steadfastness is the ability to remain steady under pressure, even as you advance. This is so true for our lives, and our life as a church together. We need to learn, in the words of Eugene Peterson, *‘A long obedience in the same direction.’* There are days when it feels like you are sailing with the wind behind you, and other days when you feel you are making headway painfully with the wind against you, like the disciples in Mark 6 who sailed across the sea of Galilee. We must realize that Jesus is very present with us on both these kinds of days. He is steadfast. He never leaves us or forsakes us. One of the most comforting verses in all of Scripture is Lamentations 3:22. *“Because of the Lord’s great love we are not consumed. The steadfast love of the Lord never ceases. His mercies never come to an end. They are new every morning. Great is His faithfulness.”* May the Lord direct our hearts towards his steadfastness this fast. Let’s trust Him for new mercies every morning too!

One way in which the Thessalonians became more steadfast in love, was that they allowed God to re-order their loves in the place of idol worship. 1 Thessalonians 1:10 describes this “They tell how you turned from worthless idols to worship the living and true God and to wait for His Son from heaven, Jesus who rescues us from the coming wrath.” In the words of James K. A. Smith, “Worship is the arena in which God recalibrates our hearts, reforms our desires, and re-orders our loves. Worship isn’t just something we do; it is where God does something to us. Worship is the heart of discipleship because it is the gymnasium in which God retrains our hearts.” Can we allow God to re-order our loves today in order to return to Him as our first love?

Finally, Paul's language is one of family affection toward this young church – dear brothers and sisters. The gospel have made them a family. Let's pray that the Lord would make us an even more faithful family towards one other, with a willingness to be loved, known and challenged.

Prayer reflections:

1. Think about the steadfast love of the Lord in your life and thank Him for it. Write down remembrances of His faithfulness
2. Repent where you have lacked steadfastness in your life and ask Him for His steadfastness to resource you in these areas.
3. Ask the Lord for new mercies in areas in which you may feel stuck.
4. Think about relationships that require steadfast love and new mercies. Ask the Lord for courage to take a gracious step forwards in difficult relationships.

**WE GATHER TOGETHER TONIGHT AT 6:30P
13547 BRANDING IRON PL
CHINO, CA 91710**

Day Two, Tuesday 9/23

Steadfast in Battle – Kelly Monaghan, Southlands Chino

2 Thess 2-4 NLT *Pray, too, that we will be rescued from wicked and evil people, for not everyone is a believer. 3 But the Lord is faithful; he will strengthen you and guard you from the evil one. 4 And we are confident in the Lord that you are doing and will continue to do the things we commanded you.*

The steadfastness of Christ extends to all and every aspect of our lives, not just His love. So when we think about the battle against sin and Satan, we may not separate it from the unwavering faithfulness of Christ!

Sometimes we get it wrong:

One reason why Christians fail to see tangible results and become discouraged in their struggle against the enemy is a misguided approach to warfare. Many Christians erroneously believe that effective spiritual warfare primarily hinges on their own strength, resolve, and sincerity in overcoming the enemy. However, this perspective is akin to placing faith in faith rather than in Christ, the object of our faith. The reality is, the enemy is stronger and smarter than us, our sincerity and human power is inconsequential. If you believe that the volume or intensity of your battlecry intimidates the enemy, you are gravely mistaken.

So what should we do?

If we try to battle against the enemy in our own strength, we will lose every time, so what should we do? Unlike the faithfulness of man, which is limited in power and subject to the elements, the fidelity of the steadfastness of Christ is immutable (not subject to anything or anyone)! Notice in vs 3 how Paul encourages the Thessalonians by saying “He will strengthen you...” He will “guard you from the evil one”. The emphasis is on Christ, not our ability; no where does Paul say “you will establish yourself” or “you will guard yourself.”

Yet we do have a responsibility to fight! We do have a strength and resolve to display in battle, we do have a shout to yell from the top of our lungs with all the gusto and sincerity we can muster and it is this, “*Jesus is my steadfast*

protector and champion!" So, as the enemy hurls insult, accusation, threat and temptation our way, we don't give in; we stick our fingers in our ears and stand firm in the fidelity of Jesus! We declare the truth to both the enemy and ourselves that no weapon formed against us shall prosper because Christ is the steadfast Defender, steadfast Captain and steadfast King!

Practices for today:

As your stomach grumbles today, you will be faced with the reality of both the enemy's tactics and your flesh warring against you. You may experience the condemnation of the devil. Satan himself may conspire against you to hinder you from becoming more like Christ. Your own heart may desire things that are not in line with the will of God. Before you default to trying to overcome these things in your own strength, do a couple practical things:

1. Begin in thankful prayer:

- Begin your day in prayer thanking Jesus that he has overcome both sin and Satan through his death on the cross and his resurrection from the grave.
- Thank Him that His victory is shared with you, that you are no longer enslaved to sin and are no longer under the control of the kingdom of darkness.
- Think of areas of your life that you have seen recent victories in... spiritual, physical, provision, relationships, church community, etc.

2. When temptation or attack comes your way:

- Place your hope in the steadfast victory of Christ. Remind yourself and the enemy that even though you are not enough, Jesus is more than enough.

Some Scripture to meditate on and pray out...

- **Deut 20:4** For the Lord your God is he who goes with you to fight for you against your enemies, to give you the victory.'
- **2 Cor 2:14** But thanks be to God, who in Christ always leads us in triumphal procession, and through us spreads the fragrance of the knowledge of him everywhere.
- **John 16:33** "... I have said these things to you, that in me you may have peace. In the world you will have tribulation. But take heart; I have overcome the world."

- **Romans 8:37** ... in all these things we are more than conquerors through him who loved us.
- **Phil 4:13** I can do all things through him who strengthens me.
- **1 John 4:4** Little children, you are from God and have overcome them, for he who is in you is greater than he who is in the world.
- **Col 2:15** He disarmed the rulers and authorities and put them to open shame, by triumphing over them in him.
- **Ro 8:39** Nor height nor depth, nor anything else in all creation, will be able to separate us from the love of God in Christ Jesus our Lord.

A Practical prayer to recite today:

"Jesus, thank you that you have overcome both sin and Satan on my behalf. Thank you that I don't have to fight in my own strength. I acknowledge that my strength is not enough to win the battle. In this very moment, I remind myself that I am yours and that you love me and that you are my steadfast champion. These areas of temptation, I surrender to you. These areas of fear and anxiety, I acknowledge that you are good and in control. In these areas where I am experiencing the attack of the enemy, I call on you to fight for me and I trust your ability to vanquish my foe. Encourage me today to keep my hope in you and not in myself. In your holy, powerful name. Amen"

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Day Three, Wednesday 9/24

Steadfast in Mission – Jon Marshall, Southlands Santa Ana

Thessalonians 3:1 (NIV) As for other matters, brothers and sisters, pray for us that the message of the Lord may spread rapidly and be honored, just as it was with you.

Our theme this week has been “steadfast.” We want to be sturdy, strong, resilient, persevering people. We have challenged our bodies to face hunger and depletion, as a message to our souls that we can endure through Christ’s strength.

On the first day, we pursued the Lord, asking him to make us steadfast in love. So often, Jesus must re-encourage his people not to give up on their love for one another or their love for others. It is *easy* to give up; it comes naturally and effortlessly. But, the better way, the way of Jesus, the direction of the Spirit is to be filled with Christ’s love so that we can love others. Toward that end, Paul prays that God would direct us toward God’s love (his love for us and our love for God) to be empowered to persevere in union with Christ.

On the second day, we pursued the Lord, asking him to make us steadfast in battle. When Satan attacks, sin seems so tempting, our bodies feel weak, and we just want to give up. We’re in the battle and want to come through victorious. How will we triumph? Not by looking within, not by relying on our own strength, but only by being united by faith with Jesus.

On this final day of the fast, we pursue the Lord, asking him to make us steadfast on mission. Paul’s goal for our lives is that we would see ourselves as partners with God, co-laborers in his vineyard, wanting to produce the crop that he’s got in mind. Our relationships, jobs, hobbies, and activities can all be pointed toward this one grand vision of advancing the kingdom of God.

Two Challenges Confront Us and Call for Steadfastness

Distraction—we are bombarded with images of a different vision for our lives. The world markets its “best life” to us through every screen. The devil wants us to take a detour into one of these “dreams” for our lives.

Disinterest—with so many immediate and tangible “options” for our “dream life,” we can lose interest in the kingdom of God. The kingdom of God takes time to develop and its benefits are sometimes intangible or hard to detect, whereas the “good life” the world offers is “right here, right now.” It is hard to stay invested in something you can’t always see.

The apostle Paul knows all about these challenges, so he calls the church to steadfastness. Read 2 Thessalonians 3:1. In what does Paul place his hope? How can he be confident that we will remain on mission with God?

“Pray for us”—the strength to persevere on mission comes from God himself. God gives us “the will” to keep going after him. Read Philippians 2:13.

“Just as it was for you”—every Christian has evidence that the mission of God is effective and worth it. That evidence is their own life. Someone who was on mission with God sought you out and led you to the Lord; you accepted Jesus as your King and you’ve been benefiting ever since. You know that God can change lives, because he changed yours!

When we’re on mission with God, we pray for what Paul mentions: that “the message would spread rapidly and be honored.” We pray for the rapid spread of the message about Jesus and that the message would be honored. We want God’s word about Jesus to go out into every home, every cubicle, every gym and grocery store and sports park. And, when people hear the message, we want them to value it, to consider it worth their time and attention.

Pray for the spread of the Gospel because God is able and the proof is in your own faith!

God wants you to join him on mission.

- 1) Ask the Lord where and how he wants you to join him. Write down any places or people that come to mind as you pray.
- 2) Ask God what he is able to do in the lives of those people. What does he want to heal, change, correct, transform, or bless? Write down any ideas that come to mind.
- 3) Reflect on what God has done in your life. How has he changed, healed, blessed, or redeemed your life? Write down what you think of and thank God for the work he's done in you.
- 4) In light of what you know God is able to do and what you sense he might want to do in the lives of non-Christians in your life, pray that he would enable you to persevere on mission with him.

The devil wants to distract us away from God's mission, but God is able to keep us on track, persevering with him as we build his kingdom.

WE BREAK THE FAST TOGETHER TONIGHT AT 6:30P
13547 BRANDING IRON PL
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