

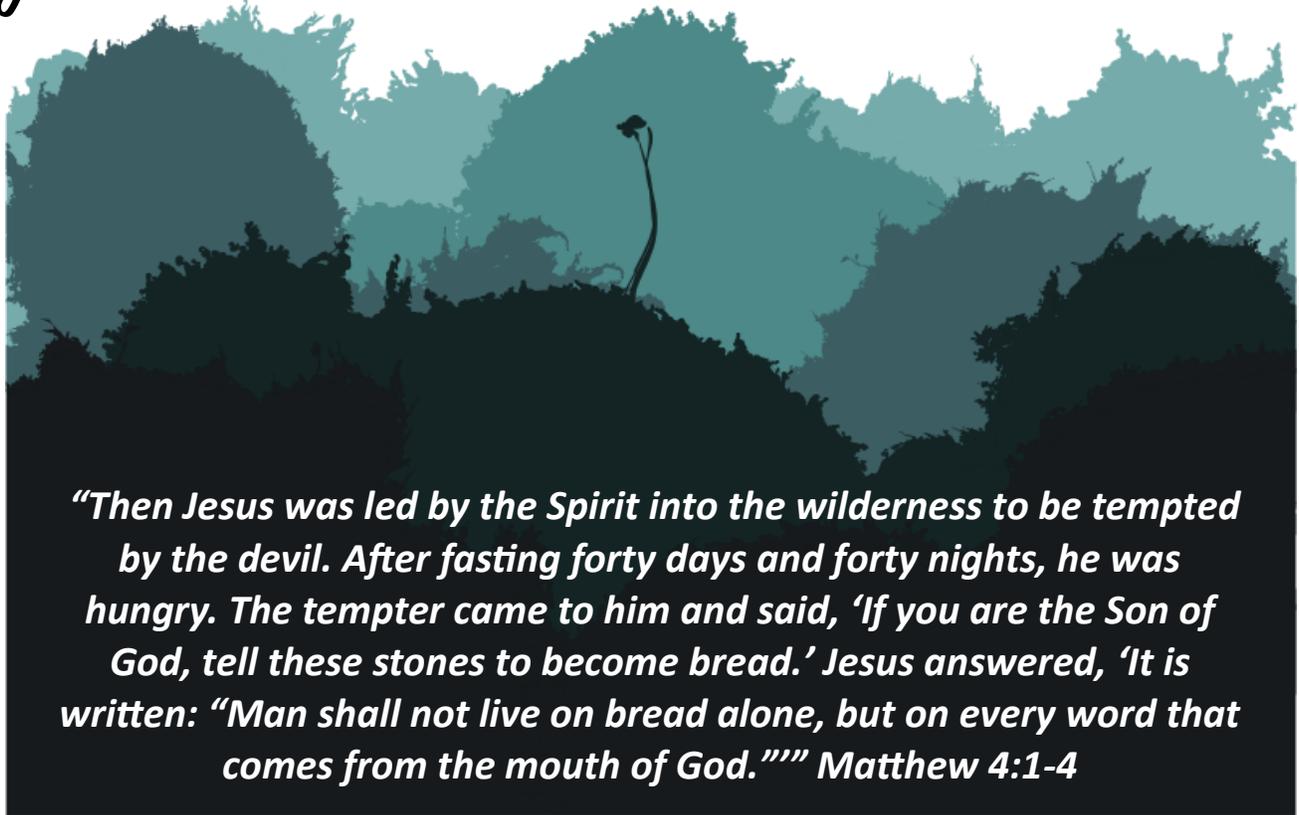


# *Personal Devotional Workbook*

**September 9-13, 2019**

**7-8 pm @ Living Hope**

# Why do we fast?



***“Then Jesus was led by the Spirit into the wilderness to be tempted by the devil. After fasting forty days and forty nights, he was hungry. The tempter came to him and said, ‘If you are the Son of God, tell these stones to become bread.’ Jesus answered, ‘It is written: “Man shall not live on bread alone, but on every word that comes from the mouth of God.”” Matthew 4:1-4***

The devil thought he was catching Jesus in a moment of weakness, but it was really a time of great strength. Jesus had been fasting, so although His body was likely weak with hunger, He was strong enough to stand up to the enemy having spent 40 days in communion with God and the Spirit. When we fast, we are denying ourselves one of the most basic of needs in order to force ourselves to depend on God for our nourishment. It can be a powerful time when we choose to put aside what we “can’t live without” in order to prove that God is the only sustenance we truly need.

We can apply the principle of fasting to anything in our lives that has taken a place of dependence in our hearts. Things like television, social media, smartphones, fear, worry, or whatever else God may speak to you about. It’s a conscious putting aside of something to intentionally seek God in its place. Fasting is an act of obedience. There are many instances in the Bible where God called His people to fast and pray earnestly to get a specific result. It is not to manipulate God, but to show Him our desperation for His intervention by denying ourselves and seeking His will.

# How do we fast?

*“When you fast, do not look somber as the hypocrites do, for they disfigure their faces to show others they are fasting. Truly I tell you, 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 others 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.”*  
**Matthew 6:16-18**



The Message translation states it very simply in the first part of this passage: “When you practice some appetite-denying discipline to better concentrate on God, don’t make a production out of it.” We are to have an attitude of humility. We cannot fast because others are doing it, or because we think it will get us extra credit within the church. Fasting is to motivate us to have a deeper connection with God and to receive the word that is to be our daily strength.

**Step One:** Take time to pray about what God would have you fast for this week. Identify the areas in your heart where you need God’s intervention or a deeper relationship with Him.

**Step Two:** Prepare yourself to join with your brothers and sisters in Christ in prayer for the sake of our church, community, and nation.

**Step Three:** Come expecting great things from God! He is a God who wants to be found by us and to give us the gift of His Holy Spirit! (Luke 11:9-13)

*Day 1:*

# *Praying With Purpose – The Lord's Prayer*

**Read: Matthew 6:5-15; Luke 11:1-4**

Jesus gave us very clear instructions on prayer. He taught us what our attitude and approach should, or should not, be and gave us an outline of what is important to Him for us to pray. First, we address God as our heavenly Father. This puts us in a place of deep relationship with Him right from the beginning, which is necessary for us to come to Him, not as an acquaintance, but as His beloved child.

Take a moment and reflect on your relationship with God as your Father. Why do you think Jesus made a point of highlighting this fact to us? Continue through the Lord's Prayer. Stop after every "prayer point" Jesus gave and reflect upon the purpose and meaning behind it. Spend a few minutes journaling about what God is speaking to you about praying the Lord's Prayer.

**Read: Matthew 6:14-15; Colossians 3:12-13**

Not only does Jesus tell us to pray for our own forgiveness, but to also be prayerfully walking in forgiving others. He even goes back to it after the prayer outline and says that if we want our own forgiveness, then we **MUST** forgive others. Also, in Colossians, Paul gives the outline of the character of the new man. When we become believers, we have been made 100% new through what Jesus accomplished at the cross, but this list of characteristics is to be developed in us through relationship with the Holy Spirit. Forgiveness plays an important role here as Paul also says that we **MUST** forgive as Christ forgave us.

Sometimes unforgiveness can take up residence in our hearts without our notice. Or it can be easy to justify needing time to process before we are able to forgive. But Jesus said that if we want forgiveness, we need to forgive. How can we develop a prayer life with our heavenly Father if we are holding bitterness, resentment, and/or unforgiveness towards those whom He also has adopted and loves unconditionally?

Take some time and ask God for the names of people that you are either working through forgiveness for or are holding resentment towards. Ask Him to show you people you may have forgotten about or situations that were left unresolved. Before we proceed into the rest of this week, or even the years and seasons ahead, we need to shed some of this unnecessary weight so that we can be walking in obedient, effective prayer.

# Day 2: Praying In Unity

**Read: John 17:20-24; Acts 2:1-4, 4:23,24,31**

Our need for unity with God is not separate from our need for unity with the body of Christ, the church. One of the last things Jesus prayed before He was taken to be crucified was that we would find unity with each other so that we could understand the unity of the Trinity in order for us to behold Jesus' glory, which came from the Father. This unity transcends friendships and casual relationships with one another. This unity came to the early church through PRAYER. When they gathered together and prayed and worshipped together, they became of one mind and the HOLY SPIRIT showed up! Again, and again, they would gather to pray, continuing in one-mindedness, and Holy Spirit would show up in power and authority, giving them the ability to see people healed, set free, and to preach the gospel with boldness. It was a praying church that saw lives changed and the numbers were growing DAILY. (Acts 2:47)

Are you earnestly seeking unity with Christ AND with your brothers and sisters in the church? Why do you think Jesus was praying for us to understand this unity? Spend some time reflecting on the passage in John 17 and allow the Holy Spirit to show you areas that require some growth in your heart and life.

**Read: James 5:13-16**

This passage in James paints a practical picture for the church. Are you hurting? Pray. Is anyone sick? Pray together. Confess your sins to one another and pray for each other. Not only are we to provide emotional, physical, and practical support for one another, but we are to be praying for each other, with each other. It is good to pray for others during your personal prayer, but we need to be praying WITH each other in the same way.

If someone were to ask you to pray for them, what would your response be? How would you feel about praying for someone outside your usual social circle? Do you ask for prayer when you need it? How do you feel the church is responding to this call of unity in prayer?

Spend some time asking God to show you how you can grow in this area, and how you can pray for the church to grow.



# *Day 3: Praying for the Church*

**Read: Matthew 28:18-20; Luke 24:44-49; Acts 1:4-8**

Before Jesus ascended into heaven, He gave the disciples their final instructions, which were just reminders of what He had been teaching and mentoring them in all along. He restates their purpose, informs them of their authority, and tells them in Whose power they will act.

We at Living Hope have many ministries that are fulfilling this call to teach, disciple, and support one another. We need to be prayerfully supporting each one, so they are able to continue doing what God has given them the call to do. As a body, we should be praying often for those serving and be looking for ways to use our own gifts, talents, and passions to serve our church.

Are you aware of all the areas our church is growing and teaching? Take some time to pray for each ministry, our staff, and the many volunteers who serve so that we can continue to see growth in our future.



**Ministries:**

Pastoral Care, Men's, Women's, Marriage, Young at Heart, Friendship, Small Groups, Prayer, Worship, Faith at Home, Youth (Jr. and Sr. High), and Children's.

**Staff:**

Shawn Brix – Senior Pastor

Al Westerman – Youth Pastor

Mike Broersma – Worship Director

Emeline Schmidt – Office Administrator

Christy Stover – Adult Ministries Coordinator

Carol Patterson-Leclerc – Children's Ministry Coordinator

Linda Millard – Facilities Manager and Custodian

Joanne Brethour - Bookkeeper

# Day 4: Praying for our City and Nation

**Read: Psalm 47:8; 1 Timothy 2:1-2; Romans 13:1**

God has made it clear that He rules over all the nations of the earth. He establishes all authorities and calls us to submit to them. We are very blessed in a free, democratic nation where we have a voice on issues that arise in all levels of our government, but with this great blessing comes an even greater responsibility to pray for our leaders and our communities. God commands us to submit to all governing authorities (as long as there's no biblical conflict), and also to pray for them.

When the Israelites were exiled from their homeland to Babylon, God told His people to pray for those who were in authority over them because it would be good for them. There was a promise that even though the situation wasn't ideal, God would use the prayers of His people to prosper them, wherever they ended up living. (Jer. 29:7) This principle is very real for us today.

**“If my people, who are called by my name, will humble themselves and pray and seek my face and turn from their wicked ways, then I will hear from heaven, and I will forgive their sin and will heal their land.”** 2 Chronicles 7:14 (Emphasis added)

If we will humble ourselves, turn from wrongdoing, and fervently seek God as the ruler of all nations to do His work then He will respond to us with healing and forgiveness. This is what we long for in our city and in our nation. Spend some time praying for our city and national leaders, especially as there is an upcoming federal election in October 2019.

## How to Pray for Government Leaders:

1. Pray that they would have a personal revelation of the Lord Jesus Christ.
2. Pray that they would recognize their own need to depend on God for knowledge, wisdom and for the courage to do what is right.
3. Pray that they would reject all counsel that violates righteousness and resist all pressure to violate their own conscience.
4. Pray that they would rely upon prayer and the Word of God as their source of daily strength, wisdom and courage.
5. Pray that they would bring dignity, honour, trustworthiness and integrity to the office that they hold.
6. Pray that they would remember to be good examples in their conduct to the people of Canada who look to them for leadership
7. Pray that they would be reminded daily that they are accountable to Almighty God for the decisions that they make.

(Taken from [www.familyaction.ca/how-to-pray-for-government-leaders](http://www.familyaction.ca/how-to-pray-for-government-leaders))



# *Day 5: Joining in Prayer and Worship*

**Read: 2 Chronicles 20:1-30**

In this story, prayer, fasting, worship, and God's provision are so tightly woven together. When King Jehoshaphat learns about an army that could wipe out the nation of Judah, His first response is to call everyone to prayer and fasting. All the people of Judah left their homes and gathered in Jerusalem to pray earnestly for God to speak to them. As they did this, the Holy Spirit fell on one man who then delivered an encouraging word and the battle strategy. The response from the King and the people is astounding.

They are so thankful that God responded to their prayers that they either fall with their faces to the ground or stand with hands lifted high in worship. Even as they walked out in obedience to God's instructions, they were worshipping and praising. When the battle was over and the plunder gathered, they responded again in praise and thanksgiving to God. What a humbling example these people present for us.

What has God spoken to you this week? Have you experienced any change in your heart or mind? After hearing from God, is your natural response to be thankful and worshipful towards Him?

Take some time to express your thanks and be prepared to join your brothers and sisters in a night of worship, communion, and response to the goodness of our great God!



*“Shout for joy to the Lord, all the earth. Worship the Lord with gladness; come before him with joyful songs. Know that the Lord is God. It is he who made us, and we are his; we are his people, the sheep of his pasture. Enter his gates with thanksgiving and his courts with praise; give thanks to him and praise his name. For the Lord is good and his love endures forever; his faithfulness continues through all generations.”*  
*Psalm 100:1-5*