

Brackley Baptist CHURCH

www.brackleybaptist.org.uk



PRAYER AND FASTING

DISCERN | ENVISION | FOLLOW | GROW

Sun 19th - Sat 25th Feb

A GUIDE

Praying and fasting together

This week of prayer and fasting is specifically about beginning to discern the mission (purpose for existing), and the vision (how we begin to implement our mission), of Brackley Baptist Church.

We all know the importance of prayer. It's a vital link with our Father in heaven. Someone once said, "7 days without prayer makes one weak."
We need prayer just as we need the air we breathe.

Fasting is a discipline often neglected in the church, I can put my hand up to that one! I appreciate that some of you may never have fasted, others fasted occasionally, and still others fast on a regular basis.

So we are all on the same page, I've put together this document as a guide on fasting. I've also suggested some direction on prayer, and a practical way to feedback what you sense God might be saying to you as you pray and discern His will for our Church

Please will you make it a priority to pray, and fast if you are able to this week.

So why Fast?

In the Bible, fasting is assumed rather than directly commanded.

*"When you fast, do not look sombre 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, 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

Both in the Old and New Testaments, fasting was a general practice amongst the people of God; Moses, Elijah, Esther, Nehemiah, Daniel, and Paul, all fasted at crucial times. Jesus both taught and modelled fasting. Godly men and women throughout the centuries have used fasting as a means to draw near to God.

Fasting is more than just skipping a few meals. It is giving up eating, or something else, for a period of time to focus more completely on God.

There are a number of possible reasons for fasting:

- To humble yourself before God in confession and repentance (Jonah 3:5, 5:10; Neh. 1:4-7)
- For spiritual renewal
- To seek guidance about a major decision (Judges 20:26-28; Acts 13:1-3)
- To focus on prayer for a particular need (Ezra 8:21)
- To develop discipline and learn to deny physical cravings (1 Cor. 9:27)
- When engaged in spiritual warfare (Matthew 4:1-11)

Fasting is ...

- Not a way to “pay” for your sins or “earn” God’s love.
- Not a way to “force” God to do something.
- Not a way to show off or prove your spirituality.
- Not a way to lose weight or improve your health.

Fasting is ...

- Not so much about food as it is about focus.
- Not so much about saying no to the body as it is about saying yes to the Spirit.
- Not about doing without, it is about looking within.
- An outward response to an inward attitude and cry of the soul.
- Not a means of seeking God's blessings, as much as it is a means of seeking God.
- Not a test for super saints, it is not a means of twisting God's arm, and it is not a magical formula for getting through to God.
- Feasting on the Lord. Looking to him for comfort, power, strength, guidance, forgiveness, and hope.

*“Fasting reminds us that we are sustained by every word that proceeds from the mouth of God (Matthew 4:4).
Food does not sustain us; God sustains us.”*

- Richard J Foster

Types of fasting

You might be thinking, “Ah, I couldn’t possibly do without food for a whole week.” Fasting is not about punishing yourself, as said earlier, it’s about focusing our attention on God.

Consider the following types of fasting:

- **Complete fast:** You don’t eat any food at all, and only drink water & juice. You might do this for a whole week, or just one day. You might only skip breakfast or lunch for the whole week, or just do it for one day. Do what is comfortable-ish for you. Spend the time you would normally eat in prayer.
- **Partial fast:** give up some, but not all foods (e.g. give up meat, sweets, chocolate, Coffee etc.). Whenever you crave what you give up, turn to prayer instead.
- **Non-food fasts:** give up TV, social media, etc. Instead use the time to pray

You might like to mix and match how you fast during the week. However, what is important is that you spend time in prayer, but, if you can, I encourage you to try and engage with fasting on some level during the week.

“Fasting and prayer, when done in the right way, with godly motives and total abandonment to God's will, predisposes us to God's revelation, inclines us to God's will, cleanses and purges our hearts of idols in all their forms, sets us free from the world and its slavish dominion.”

- William F. Kumuyi

Record any insights

I encourage you to spend time simply listening and waiting on God in prayer. As we do so, I am confident that God will speak to us and reveal something of his will for us as a church. Be sure to record anything you sense that the Lord is saying on the pages that are at end of this booklet.

Key things to pray about

As stated at the start of this booklet, the purpose of this week of prayer, and fasting, is to seek God and ask him to reveal to us the mission & vision for the church. It's important we discern this together.

I hope the following pointers are of help.

Prayer about the mission of the church ...

The **mission** of the Church is its unchanging core purpose for existing. This is true of any church. As in a stick of rock that contains the same message running right through, what runs through the core of the church is 3 strands of DNA as follows:

1. **Loving God with everything we have** (Worship/Adoration). *If you haven't already heard it, it might help you to listen to the sermon preached on the 8th Jan 2023 - it's on the church website*
2. **Loving each other from the heart** (Discipleship/Personal growth/Friendship). *Listen to the sermon preached on the 15th Jan 2023.*
3. **Loving the lost** (Evangelism/Outreach/Community). Loving those beyond the walls of the church. *Listen to the sermon preached on the 22nd Jan 2023.*

Have a go at writing a one sentence strap-line for the church, which encompasses the 3 strands of DNA above **Be sure to record any insights and pass them on to the leadership team.**

Prayer about the vision of the church ...

Consider the following questions:

- What do you sense God might be saying about what the church should look like say, 5 years from now?
- In what way is God asking you to play a part? What is it that God is calling you to do?
- What is God saying about where our focus should be?
- When you consider the purpose of the church, what is it that causes your heart to ache?
- Is God placing a burden on your heart for a particular ministry area?

Be sure to record any insights and pass them on to the leadership team.

Record any insights here ...

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Please add your name in case we need clarity of what you have written
