

Daily Devotional Day 1 - "Fasting without the Word is Just a Diet"

Matthew 4:4, "Jesus answered, "It is written: 'Man shall not live on bread alone, but on every word that comes from the mouth of God.'"

Welcome to Day 1 of our 21 days of prayer and fasting. It is important during this time of seeking the Lord that you spend time reading the Word of God and establishing a daily devotional. When we spend time in the Word of God, we spend time with God. He and His Word are One and His Word is living and active. As we read the Word, we learn more about Him and His ways.

Each day we will have a devotional along with a scripture for reading. Set aside time to read and meditate upon the devotionals and of course read your Bible. It is good to do this first thing in the morning before you begin your day so that you will be able to focus on God first. As you do that, He will help you organize the rest of your day. We also suggest you read before you go to bed at night so that you will have the Word in your mind before you go to sleep.

When reading your daily devotionals, pray about how you can apply to your life what you are reading. The Word of God is for us to live not just read. If there are things you need to change, change them. If there is an attitude you need to correct, correct it. Do not just read and/or hear the Word but actually become a doer of it.

It is said that anything you do for 21 days becomes a habit. A habit is a pattern of behavior that becomes woven into our brain. We encourage you to create a new habit of reading the Word and spending time with the Lord by committing to each day for these next 21 days. As you set aside time to draw closer to the Lord, He will come closer to you.

Scripture: James 4:7-8 ESV, "[7] Submit yourselves therefore to God. Resist the devil, and he will flee from you. [8] Draw near to God, and he will draw near to you. Cleanse your hands, you sinners, and purify your hearts, you double-minded."

Questions for you to consider:

1. How often do you "eat" God's Word? Are you spiritually malnourished?
2. How do you respond when the enemy tries to come against your mind with lies over and over again?
3. Do you know you have authority based on the Word of God to command him to leave by believing and confessing God's Word?

Activating the Word:

Take a moment to find scriptures to help you defeat any lies the enemy has whispered to you. Identify scriptures from the Word of God to believe and then confess so you can be set free. Journal whatever the Lord speaks to your heart.

Daily Devotional Day 2 - "Got Fruit?"

Matthew 7:20, "Therefore by their fruits you will know them"

Our mission statement at Antioch is to **Build People to Reflect Jesus**. Our aim is to preach and teach the Word of God so that disciples will be made. A disciple is not just one who believes in Jesus but one who actually acts like him. ***Acts 11:26, "and when he found him, he brought him to Antioch. So for a whole year Barnabas and Saul met with the church and taught great numbers of people. The disciples were called Christians first at Antioch."***

In order to look like Jesus, we must follow in His way. ***Luke 9:23, "And he said to them all, if any man will come after me, let him deny himself, and take up his cross daily, and follow me."***

When we examine the text, Jesus declares that if we will come after Him, it will require self-denial. The Greek Word for ***come*** in this verse is ***erchomai***, it is a verb and means to appear from one place to another publicly. Following Jesus is not a task that can be accomplished in private or in secret. This definition also denotes moving from one place to another. No one follows and remains in the same place. In order to follow Jesus, we must be willing to lay aside our agenda and do exactly what He wants us to do. Our eyes must stay focused on Him.

Let's examine the word ***follow***, it derives from the Greek word ***akoloutheo*** which means to follow one who precedes, to join him as his attendant, to accompany him. We must be careful to follow Him and not go before Him. When we go ahead of Him, we make critical mistakes. We must not go first then ask God to come along and bless what we are doing. This is out of order and will never work in the Kingdom of God. We must follow Him at all times.

Once you begin to truly follow Jesus, prepare yourself mentally for the journey. We must be prepared to go through whatever is necessary to follow Jesus. We must remember to rejoice "in through", not wait until while we are "out of through". There may be pain, heartache, discomfort, persecution, tests, trials and/or tribulation; however, we must continue to follow.

Questions for you to consider:

1. Are there areas in your life that you are leading rather than following the Lord?
2. If you were someone else looking at your own life, what fruit could you identify that proves you are a disciple of Christ?
3. Are you ever tempted to stop following Jesus? If so when are those times?

Activating the Word:

Spend some time asking the Lord to point out areas in your life that you need to surrender to Him. Find scriptures you can stand on to assist you in your journey. Journal whatever the Lord speaks to your heart.

Daily Devotional Day 3 - Return to Jesus

Joel 2:12 NIV “Even now,” declares the Lord, “return to me with all your heart, with fasting and weeping and mourning.

God is calling us to return to Him with all of our heart. There are times in our walk with the Lord that we may allow distractions to draw us away from Jesus but thank God for grace. Grace means that we have another opportunity to return to Him. We must make a decision every day to lay aside every weight and focus our hearts first and foremost on the Lord. Matthew 6:33 tells us to seek first the Kingdom of God and His righteousness and all these things will be added unto us. Seek Him first – before we seek anything else, we must seek the Lord.

Thank God for the covenant of Grace that we live under. Under the Old Covenant, man had to rely on his works and his sacrifices to be right with God. Under the New Covenant, we have every wrong that we have done or will do forgiven at the Cross because of Jesus.

As you spend time in prayer and fasting today, you can establish a strong passionate connection with the Lord as He becomes the object of your affection. Do not allow your love or passion for God to become lukewarm and certainly not cold. To keep your relationship with the Father passionate, spend time studying God’s Word and in prayer and worship before the Father focusing on who He is. Do not worry about what problems you have, what prayer requests you want to talk to the Father about, just focus on honoring Him and celebrating Him for His goodness, His mercy, His unconditional love, His sovereignty. Focus on who God is, seek Him first, return to Him and receive all that He has for you. Make today a day where your passion will be reignited and grow from day to day during the next 21 days of fasting and prayer.

Questions for you to consider:

1. What have been some distractions that have deterred you from your walk with the Lord?
2. Would you describe your relationship with the Lord as strong and passionate? Lukewarm? Cold?
3. What are some practical things you can do to cultivate a passionate strong relationship with the Lord?

Activating the Word:

Be intentional today about hearing from the Lord and obeying what He speaks. Before you speak or act, take a moment to pray and ask the Lord how you should respond. At the end of the day, journal your results.

Daily Devotional Day 4 - "He Produces the Fruit"

Galatians 5:22-23, "But the fruit of the Spirit is love, joy, peace, longsuffering, gentleness, goodness, faith, meekness, temperance: against such there is no law."

The Holy Spirit is the One who produces fruit in the life of the Believer. The flesh produces works and the Holy Spirit produces fruit. Another way of saying this is when we are led by the flesh we will produce bad fruit; however, when we are led by the Spirit, we will produce good fruit. During this fast, we hope that you will become led by the Spirit and controlled by the Spirit so good fruit (fruit of the Spirit) and not bad fruit (works) will manifest in your life.

Apples always produce apples; oranges always produce oranges; dogs always produce dogs; fish always produce fish. The seed always produces after its kind. The moment you receive Jesus Christ as your personal Lord and Savior, His Spirit now lives in you and He will produce Himself in you. The fruit of the Spirit is an outward manifestation of an inner working.

As we focus upon sowing to the Spirit, we can expect to receive fruit back from the Spirit. The fruit that the Spirit produces is wonderful, godly fruit that blesses not only your life but all those you come in contact with. Surrender to the Lord and allow the work of the Holy Spirit to produce the fruit in you that will draw others to Christ.

Questions for you to consider:

1. What does being led by the Spirit versus being led by the flesh mean? When you evaluate your daily responses, what leads you the most?
2. If you were to ask others what kind of fruit they see in your life, how do you think they would answer?
3. What steps do you need to take so that the Holy Spirit can produce His fruit in your life?

Activating the Word:

Spend some time asking the Lord to point out good and bad fruit in your life. Be willing to be open for the Lord to speak. Surrender the bad fruit to the Lord and ask Him to cultivate good fruit. Journal whatever the Lord speaks to your heart.

Daily Devotional Day 5 - "The Fruit of Love"

Galatians 5:22-23, "But the fruit of the Spirit is love, joy, peace, longsuffering, gentleness, goodness, faith, meekness, temperance: against such there is no law."

When the New Testament was being written, there were four primary Greek words to describe the concept of "love".

1. Eros which is the Greek term for sexual love.
2. Phileo which describes affection
3. Agape which is the word chiefly used in the New Testament to depict the love of God. This is the Word that Paul uses in Galatians 5:22.

Agape occurs when an individual sees, recognizes, understands or appreciates the value of an object or a person, causing the viewer to behold this object or person in great esteem, awe, admiration, wonder and sincere appreciation. Agape is a love that loves so profoundly that it knows no limits or boundaries. Agape is the highest form of love – a self-sacrificial type of love that moves the lover to action.

Agape love seeks the highest good of others. It is a love that has no strings attached. This love is not based on emotions or feelings. It is a decision to be committed to the well-being of others without any conditions or circumstances. When God's Word has been sown into our hearts, the potential to love like this is within us all the time. We must allow the Spirit of God to release this love from our hearts through the fruit of the Spirit called love.

Questions for you to consider:

1. Do you believe it's possible for agape love to flow through you?
2. Would people around you say that agape love operates in you or would they say your love is conditional?
3. Have you ever experienced agape love for anyone in your life? How did that make you feel?

Activating the Word:

Spend some time asking the Lord to give you revelation on agape love. Think about how that love can flow into you and out of you. Write down your thoughts in your journal.

Daily Devotional Day 6 - "The Fruits of Joy and Peace"

Galatians 5:22-23, "But the fruit of the Spirit is love, joy, peace, longsuffering, gentleness, goodness, faith, meekness, temperance: against such there is no law."

Joy is gladness that is not based on circumstances. Joy is more than happiness. It is not based on anything external. When we believe God, obey His will, receive His forgiveness, fellowship with the Saints, minister to others and share the Gospel then we will experience joy. The world can offer temporary happiness based on situations and circumstances. The fruit of joy will sustain you despite situations or the most difficult of times.

Peace is contentment, unity between people. Peace is a state of assurance, lack of fear, and a sense of contentment. It is fellowship, harmony, and unity between individuals. It is freedom from worry, disturbance, and oppressive thoughts. One definition of this word suggests the rule of order in place of chaos. No matter what chaos may be going on around you, the fruit of peace is in you and can keep you at rest.

Both of these are produced as all the fruit are supernaturally by the Holy Spirit. Regardless of whatever situations come up in your life, you can maintain your joy and peace if you will submit to the working of the Holy Spirit. Why not ask the Holy Spirit to produce the supernatural fruit of joy and peace in you?

Questions for you to consider:

1. Can you think of a time in your life when situations were against you and you did not have joy and/or peace yet somehow you found yourself experiencing joy/peace?
2. Has the joy of the Lord ever replaced sadness in your life?
3. Has peace ever replaced fear in your life?

Activating the Word:

When is it difficult for you to remain joyful and peaceful? During these times are there things you think you can do to receive the fruits of the Spirit? Write down your thoughts in your journal.

Daily Devotional Day 7 - "The Fruits of Longsuffering and Gentleness"

Galatians 5:22-23, "But the fruit of the Spirit is love, joy, peace, longsuffering, gentleness, goodness, faith, meekness, temperance: against such there is no law."

The word longsuffering comes from the Greek word makrothumia. The word is a compound word comprised of **makros** (long) and **thumos** (anger). The word gives a picture of patience or forbearance; slow to speak and slow to anger. Longsuffering should be slowness in avenging wrongs. The quality of restraint that prevents believers from speaking or acting hastily in the face of disagreement, opposition or persecution. It is also bearing pain or problems without complaining. We should not only be longsuffering with others; we should also be longsuffering with ourselves. Longsuffering has a key role in our lives if we are going to look like Jesus.

Gentleness is being merciful, sweet and tender. It is also an eagerness to put others at rest; a sweet and attractive temperament that shows friendly regard. Gentleness moves you to be a bigger blessing to others in your life; to serve them and meet their needs. When Jesus came to the earth He denied His own comfort, His own best interests and served us so that we may be reconciled to God.

Do you find yourself thinking about how you can serve others? Do you think of ways you can bless others? If you struggle to answer these questions in the affirmative, ask the Holy Spirit to cultivate this fruit in your life.

Questions for you to consider:

1. Is there any one person whom you are constantly angry, impatient and frustrated with?
How have you responded to them?
2. Have you asked that person to forgive you for being unkind?
3. In what ways do you need to change to be more accepting of others?

Activating the Word:

Are people comfortable in your presence? Do they feel they can disagree with your opinion and you still like them? Do you find it difficult to embrace other people who are different from you. Spend some time evaluating these questions before the Lord and ask Him to help you with longsuffering and gentleness. Journal your thoughts.