



BUILDING

— on the —

FOUNDATION



ALL SAINTS CHURCH

Prayer Pamphlet

Thoughts & Resources on Fasting from Our Rector

In her *Spiritual Disciplines Handbook*, author Adele Ahlberg Calhoun describes fasting as **“the self-denial of normal necessities in order to intentionally attend to God in prayer.”** Traditionally, this self-denial involves food, as eating is one of our most basic human needs. Throughout scripture, God’s people fasted. Moses, David, Anna, Jesus, Paul, and others in the early church fasted, believing that, as one fasts, a deeper, more focused kind of prayer becomes possible.

These prayers can have an internal and an external focus. Internally, as Richard Foster observes in his modern classic *Celebration of Discipline*, **“more than any other Discipline, fasting reveals the things that control us.”** For example, I have found that when I intentionally abstain from food, I become more aware of my compulsive behaviors—mostly looking at my phone. Dietrich Bonhoeffer uses strong language to underscore this point when, in his book *The Cost of Discipleship*, he writes, **“Fasting helps to discipline the self-indulgent and slothful will which is so reluctant to serve the Lord.”**

Also, as we fast, we learn more clearly how to depend on God. Dallas Willard, in his book *The Divine Conspiracy*, notes that **“when we have learned how to fast ‘in secret,’ our bodies and our souls will be directly sustained by the invisible kingdom. We will not be miserable. But we certainly will be different.”** Every time we feel hungry and do not eat, we learn that we do not have to satisfy every bodily impulse. As Stanley Hauerwas writes in his commentary on Matthew, **“To be drawn into a life of fasting is to learn to live without what I assumed I could not live without.”** As we abstain from physical food, **we can learn more and more what it means that “one does not live by bread alone, but by every word that comes from the mouth of the Lord” (Deuteronomy 8:3) and begin to understand what Jesus meant when he said, “I have food to eat that you do not know about” (John 4:32).**

John Stott, in his commentary on the Sermon on the Mount, writes of an externally focused purpose of fasting, namely solidarity with the poor. Missing a meal to pray for those who fast involuntarily is always appropriate, and this kind of a fast will likely lead to some kind of action, possibly giving the food not eaten, or the money you would have used to buy the food not eaten, to a ministry that provides food to those in need.

I’d invite each of us to join us in fasting each Monday of this October. As we engage in the practice of fasting, however, it is essential to remember that fasting will not in any way make us more acceptable to God or more loved by God. God demonstrated his love for us when, in Paul’s words, “while we were still sinners, Christ died for us” (Romans 5:8). What fasting can do, however, is draw us deeper into the reality of God’s kingdom and draw us closer to God’s heart. May this be so at All Saints.

Peace,
Chris

Monday, October 9

listening to God's voice

Last night the power in my home went out. I sleep with a fan on, and the sudden lack of noise was shocking. I was wide awake, not due to noise but silence—it was so unusual, so thorough.

In 1 Kings, God tells Elijah to listen, for he will speak. Elijah pays attention and hears a great wind, an earthquake, and a fire, but knows that these disparate noises are not God. Instead, after so much ruckus, Elijah hears a gentle whisper—this is God. I am so used to noise, but to pray, I need silence. I need attentiveness. I need to tune my ears to God's frequency.

Today, as we fast and pray, ask yourself: how is God speaking in your life? What are ways you drown out his voice, and how might this begin a season of listening—and, by God's grace, hearing?

Suggested scripture to read and reflect on: Psalm 62, Psalm 131

O God, without whose beauty and goodness our souls are unfed, without whose truth our reason withers: Consecrate our lives to your will, giving us such purity of heart, such depth of faith, and such steadfastness of purpose, that in time we may come to think your own thoughts after you; through Jesus Christ our Savior. Amen.

Monday, October 16

seeing what God is doing

So often when I fail to give thanks, it is because I have failed to see. Gratitude is a product of vision. It is the result of our noticing and paying attention to what God is about.

In Psalm 121, the psalmist lifts up their eyes, and what do they see? That God is their help. Prayer is a time to notice and then to give thanks.

Today as you fast and pray, ask yourself: what do I see God doing in my life? What do I see God doing in the life of All Saints Church? What is your vision for my life, Lord?

Suggested scripture to read and reflect on: Psalm 95, Psalm 100

Go before us, O Lord, in all our doings with your most gracious favor, and further us with your continual help; that in all our works begun, continued, and ended in you, we may glorify your holy Name, and finally, through your mercy, obtain everlasting life; through Jesus Christ our Lord. Amen.

Monday, October 23

kneeling in awe and confession

One of the postures we take in church each week is that of kneeling. We kneel to confess. When we confess, we declare the unflinching truth about ourselves in the light of God's mercy. Without this truth-telling, our lives get out of whack—we minimize grace, and we neglect worship. The striking words of the psalmist in Psalm 32 remind us of the spiritual rot that can take place when we are not honest before God:

“When I kept silent,
my bones wasted away
through my groaning all day long.”

Today as you fast and pray, ask yourself: what do I need to kneel and confess? From this kneeling position, what do I realize is true about myself and about God's grace for me?

Suggested scripture to read and reflect on: Psalm 32, 1 John 1:5-10

“God is the only person with whom you can hide nothing. Before him you will unavoidably come to see yourself in a new, unique light. Prayer, therefore, leads to a self knowledge that is impossible any other way.” - Tim Keller, *Prayer*

Almighty God our Savior, you desire that none should perish, and you have taught us through your Son that there is great joy in heaven over every sinner who repents: Grant that our hearts may ache for a lost and broken world. May your Holy Spirit work through our words, deeds, and prayers, that the lost may be found and the dead made alive, and that all your redeemed may rejoice around your throne; through Jesus Christ our Lord. Amen.

Monday, October 30

opening our hands in surrender and expectancy

The most ancient posture of worship is the *orans*—hands wide open, palms facing up. We believe as Christians in the Anglican way that the posture of our body is the desire of our souls. We move our bodies, and—however slowly—our hearts follow along. When we open our hands, we mirror the state we pray to God our hearts will take: open, surrendered, ready.

Today as you fast and pray, ask yourself: what am I clutching? What keeps my hands from opening wide to give and to receive? How might God use my open hands to worship and serve Him?

Suggested scripture to read and reflect on: Romans 12:1-8, 1 Corinthians 12

Lord Jesus, Master Carpenter of Nazareth, on the Cross through wood and nails you wrought our full salvation: Wield well your tools in this, your workshop, that we who come to you rough-hewn may be fashioned into a truer beauty by your hand; who with the Father and the Holy Spirit live and reign, one God, world without end. Amen.

The Daily Examen

The prayer of Examen (popularized by St. Ignatius Loyola, a 16th-century monk) can help slow us down in order to better discern God's presence and work in our lives. Usually the Examen is prayed at the end of the day over the course of 15 to 20 minutes. If it is helpful to you, you can gently hold the five beads as you go through the five movements of prayer listed here.

1. Presence: Remember that you are in the presence of God in a special way when you pray. Ask God to allow you to experience the Examen in love.

2. Gratitude: Thank God for who He is. Recall two or three things that happened today for which you are especially grateful. Savor them. Then thank God for these gifts.

3. Review: Review your day. What brought you life and joy? What drew you toward God? What made your heart close down? What drew you away from God?

4. Forgiveness: You may have sinned today or done something you regret. Express your sorrow to God and ask for the healing touch of the forgiving God who removes your heart's burdens.

5. Grace: You may want to return to a meaningful part of your prayer and speak to God about how you felt. Ask for his grace for your night's rest and for the following day. Prayerfully conclude the Examen, remembering the Lord's steadfast, unconditional love for you.

For more information on the capital campaign visit <https://www.allsaints-cbd.org/capital-campaign>