



24-SEVEN PRAYER WEEK

Bracken Ridge
BAPTIST CHURCH



6-12 JUNE

Beginning on Pentecost Sunday 5 June, we will be joining with churches across the Queensland Baptist Movement to pray & fast 24/7 for Revival from 6-12 June. There are different ways you can join us in prayer:

PRAY 1 HOUR PER DAY USING THIS PRAYER GUIDE

Pray 1 hour a day on on you own, using the prayer guide provided.

Prayer Guide Includes:

- Life Group Material
- Daily Devotional
- Fasting Guide

COMBINED CHURCHES PRAYER NIGHT

On 9 June at 7pm, Queensland Baptist Churches from all over North Brisbane will come together at Bracken Ridge Baptist Church to seek God in prayer as a part of our 24-7 week of prayer. This will be an exciting time where we will also give thanks to God for the amazing things He is doing through His church.

All resources & information available at
brbc.org.au/events/247-prayer-week

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LIFE GROUP MATERIAL



24 SEVEN PRAYER WEEK SMALL GROUP STUDY

24/7 PRAYER WEEK: SMALL GROUP STUDY

*Now in the church at Antioch there were prophets and teachers: Barnabas, Simeon called Niger, Lucius of Cyrene, Manaen (who had been brought up with Herod the tetrarch) and Saul. While they were **worshipping the Lord and fasting**, the Holy Spirit said, “**Set apart** for me Barnabas and Saul for the work to which I have called them.” So after they had **fasted and prayed**, they placed their hands on them and **sent them off.** (Acts 13:1-3)*

This was a pivotal moment in church history. This moment of prayer and fasting sparked a missional movement that would see Christianity become the dominant religion in the Roman Empire within 250 years. Churches were planted and letters written to those churches that would instruct and encourage the Church for the next 2000 years.

I believe that we are living in a pivotal moment in church history in Australia. We are coming out of a global pandemic. We have a generation growing up with no connection to church and confused about their identity. There is a growing antagonism towards the church and yet there is a growing recognition that science can't solve all of our problems. People in our community are searching for hope and I believe God is calling His church to get on our knees and pray for revival in our nation in our generation.

1. The Church in Antioch was worshipping the Lord and fasting. Begin your small group by spending some time in worship, declaring the goodness and greatness of our God together.
2. Fasting is giving up food for a time to focus our thoughts on God, creating a greater spiritual awareness in prayer. What is your experience of prayer and fasting? How have you heard God speak and seen God move as you have committed to fast and pray?
3. In the church in Antioch, there was a growing urgency to take the gospel to the gentile world. What is the prayer that is growing in urgency in your heart for the church and community? How is God calling you to commit to pray and/or fast until you see Him breakthrough?
4. As they fasted and prayed, they heard the Holy Spirit tell them to “*set apart Barnabas and Saul for the work to which I have called them*”. To be set apart is to be different; holy; separate from the ways of the world. How is God setting you apart to be more like Christ in your character and fulfil His calling in this season?
5. Barnabus and Saul were sent on a missionary journey throughout Asia Minor. You may not be sent to other nations or new cities, but we are all sent somewhere to share the gospel with someone. Where are you being sent to share the good news? How can the group pray for you and the people that you are sharing Jesus with?
6. Use the prayer guide to pray for some other churches in our Queensland Baptist Movement as they reach out to their communities with the love and truth of Jesus.



The background of the page is a photograph of a rural landscape. On the left, a portion of a white windmill with dark blades is visible. The middle ground shows a flat, open field under a clear sky. In the distance, a range of mountains is visible. The bottom of the image shows some dark, leafy vegetation. The text is centered on a white rounded rectangle that covers most of the page.

DAILY DEVOTIONALS

DAY ONE

JESUS' AUTHORITY

DAY 1 - JESUS ON MOUNTAIN-MOVING FAITH AND PRAYER

QB churches are praying for personal, church and national revival. Jesus frequently spoke about the importance of people's faith in the release of God's miraculous power. We have so much to learn about faith. In this series of seven devotions, we explore some of Jesus' statements on faith through the Gospel of Matthew and their implications for our praying. May God continue to grow our faith-filled prayer.

MONDAY JUNE 5: MATTHEW 8:5-13 - JESUS' AUTHORITY

MATT 8:5 When Jesus had entered Capernaum, a centurion came to him, asking for help. ⁶“Lord,” he said, “my servant lies at home paralysed, suffering terribly.” ⁷Jesus said to him, “Shall I come and heal him?” ⁸The centurion replied, “Lord, I do not deserve to have you come under my roof. But just say the word, and my servant will be healed. ⁹For I myself am a man under authority, with soldiers under me. I tell this one, ‘Go,’ and he goes; and that one, ‘Come,’ and he comes. I say to my servant, ‘Do this,’ and he does it.” ¹⁰When Jesus heard this, he was amazed and said to those following him, “Truly I tell you, I have not found anyone in Israel with such **great faith**. ¹¹I say to you that many will come from the east and the west, and will take their places at the feast with Abraham, Isaac and Jacob in the kingdom of heaven. ¹²But the subjects of the kingdom will be thrown outside, into the darkness, where there will be weeping and gnashing of teeth.” ¹³Then Jesus said to the centurion, “Go! Let it be done just as you believed it would.” And his servant was healed at that moment.

The centurion was a Roman commander in charge of 100 soldiers (similar to a captain in the Australian army). The Roman army had a very clear command structure. Jesus referred to this in Matthew 21:22 when he said, “The rulers of the Gentiles lord it over them, and their high officials exercise authority over them.” If you were one of the centurion’s soldiers, you did exactly what you were told or else. Exactly what you were told! There was no discussion or debate or excuse. You completely submitted to those in authority over you.

The centurion brought this model to his thinking about spiritual authority. In his mind it was black and white. If Jesus was in charge, then every disease or demon or distress was under his authority. Jesus didn’t need to bargain or argue or persuade. He was the boss. He didn’t even need to be physically present for healing. He could just “say the word.” That’s how powerful the centurion believed Jesus was.





DAY ONE

JESUS' AUTHORITY

After dealing with the sceptical Jewish religious leaders and the fickle crowds, the centurion's black and white faith came as a breath of fresh air to Jesus. He was bowled over by such rock-solid belief. And the guy was a Roman not even a Jew. Jesus said, "I have not found anyone in Israel with such great faith."

Personally, I'm into shades of grey. I wouldn't have lasted long in the Roman army. Very few things are absolutely clear-cut to me. This is a great advantage when dealing with broken people (like myself), but I wonder if it's a significant barrier to big faith. When it comes to the lordship of Jesus, we either believe that he has complete authority, or we don't. We either believe that he can save our family, or heal the sick, or renew our church, or bring revival, or transform our nation, or we don't.

This is not to say that Jesus will necessarily do all these things. But the question here is, "Do I believe that he has complete authority or not?" That's how big faith begins. Jesus himself said, "All authority on heaven and on earth has been given to me" (Matthew 28:18). We either believe that or we don't. A key part of our corporate and personal worship is declaring that Jesus has all authority. Great faith is always preceded by great worship.

FAITH-FILLED PRAYER FOR REVIVAL

Personal Revival: That I will experience a fresh appreciation of God's love, forgiveness, grace and mercy.

Church Revival: That God will strengthen our heart for prayer and our expectation of what he will do.

National Revival: That our nation might be forgiven for rejecting God and becoming arrogant and self-sufficient and materialistic and immoral.





DAY TWO

DESPERATION HELPS

DAY 2 - JESUS ON MOUNTAIN-MOVING FAITH AND PRAYER

TUESDAY JUNE 6: MATTHEW 9:18-22, 27-30 – DESPERATION HELPS

MATT 9:20 Just then a woman who had been subject to bleeding for twelve years came up behind him and touched the edge of his cloak. ²¹ She said to herself, “If I only touch his cloak, I will be healed.”

²² Jesus turned and saw her. “Take heart, daughter,” he said, “**your faith has healed you.**” And the woman was healed at that moment...

²⁷ As Jesus went on from there, two blind men followed him, calling out, “Have mercy on us, Son of David!”

²⁸ When he had gone indoors, the blind men came to him, and he asked them, “Do you believe that I am able to do this?” “Yes, Lord,” they replied.

²⁹ Then he touched their eyes and said, “**According to your faith let it be done to you**”; ³⁰ and their sight was restored. Jesus warned them sternly, “See that no one knows about this.”

The woman who touched the edge of Jesus’ cloak was desperate. She probably had prolonged menstrual bleeding which would have left her both anaemic and ritually unclean (and therefore excluded from normal social and religious interactions). Mark also tells us (5:26) that she had tried many doctors and had spent all her money as her condition grew worse. She was physically ill, socially isolated, spiritually rejected, and financially destitute. She faced a very bleak future.

Then along came Jesus and a new possibility emerged. She had a disease that prevented social contact, but she figured if she could just sneak through the bustling crowd without being noticed and brush against Jesus, she would be healed. And she was. She knew it immediately. So did Jesus. After taking such precautions to avoid detection, suddenly this woman found herself the centre of attention, even halting the urgent mission that Jesus was on.

Jesus stopped to assure her, “Your faith has healed you.” Now of course Jesus was not saying that the woman’s faith alone was what had healed her. It’s clear from the story that Jesus healed her. But her desperate faith in Jesus and his power had propelled her to seek healing from Jesus when others would not take the risk.

The second story about the blind men clarifies the place of faith. Like the woman, these guys were desperate. Blindness is a huge challenge in any context, but in Jesus’ day it was debilitating. The blind were





DAY TWO

DESPERATION HELPS

dependent on others for everything. So the blind men (with their helpers) pursued Jesus crying out for mercy. Jesus' question to them was, "Do you believe I am able to do this?"

This is the big faith question for the desperate: "Do you believe Jesus is able to do this?" I could be splitting hairs, but Jesus' faith question was not, "Do you believe I will do this?" That's a question for Jesus to answer. But do we believe that Jesus is able, that's the question we must answer.

And desperation helps. I suspect that there are a lot of things that God is wanting to do, but we're just not desperate enough to believe when we ask. Maybe we think there are other options. Maybe it's just not a big issue for us. Maybe we can live okay with the status quo. Maybe it takes too much effort to really believe every time we pray. Jesus said to the blind men, "According to your faith let it be done to you" (9:29). It's the same for us. Faith has a big part to play in answered prayer.

FAITH-FILLED PRAYER FOR REVIVAL

Personal Revival: That God will convict me of my sin and release a new desire to be clean and right with him.

Church Revival: That we will enjoy a strong unity together that only the Spirit can bring.

National Revival: That those who are poor or disadvantaged in our community might know God's deep love and compassion and be cared for and supported well.



DAY THREE

THE DANGER OF FAMILIARITY

DAY 3 - JESUS ON MOUNTAIN-MOVING FAITH AND PRAYER

WEDNESDAY JUNE 8: MATTHEW 13:54-58 – THE DANGER OF FAMILIARITY

MATT 13:54 Coming to his hometown, he began teaching the people in their synagogue, and they were amazed. “Where did this man get this wisdom and these miraculous powers?” they asked. ⁵⁵ “Isn’t this the carpenter’s son? Isn’t his mother’s name Mary, and aren’t his brothers James, Joseph, Simon and Judas? ⁵⁶ Aren’t all his sisters with us? Where then did this man get all these things?” ⁵⁷ And they took offense at him. But Jesus said to them, “A prophet is not without honour except in his own town and in his own home.” ⁵⁸ And he did not do many miracles there because of **their lack of faith**.

Jesus was back in Nazareth where he had grown up. Probably he was visiting his family. While they were not his priority now, Jesus still had a heart for his mum and brothers and sisters. Nazareth was a tiny village populated by only a few families. You can tell by the way the citizens can name his brothers in order that this was no metropolis. I lived in such a town for a few years when I was teaching. There were no secrets in Baralaba.

On a previous visit to the synagogue in Nazareth, Jesus had almost been killed by a local lynch mob when he dared to say that Gentiles were included in God’s plan. But things had settled down now. Jesus had established a good reputation in the region and had many followers. He was welcome to speak in their synagogue again. Perhaps the villagers now saw Jesus as a local boy who had made good. Not too many celebrities came from Nazareth. It didn’t have a strong reputation. As Nathanael asked about Jesus, “Can anything good come from Nazareth?” (John 1:46).

But just because Jesus’ hometown marvelled at his wisdom and power, didn’t mean that they believed in him. In fact, their familiarity with Jesus and his family seemed to be their major barrier to faith. They were impressed by his teaching and reputation, but they couldn’t get around his local roots. His family was as ordinary as everyone else in town. How could Jesus be anyone special. It is likely that even his brothers came to the same conclusion. John 7:5 says that they didn’t believe either. In the end, the village took offence at the authority and power of this local upstart.





DAY THREE

THE DANGER OF FAMILIARITY

And what was the result of their lack of faith in Jesus? They missed the miracles. The healings. The redemptions. The exorcisms. The wonders. The grace. Probably they didn't bother to ask Jesus for anything. They didn't see the point. What could this hometown boy do?

Of course, we didn't grow up in the same town as Jesus, so familiarity is not likely to be a problem for us. Or is it? Maybe we are so used to the ordinariness of life that we have no experience or expectation of Jesus working in power. We have a commonplace Jesus who is with us, but not an authoritative, powerful Jesus who heals and saves and works in power. Maybe it could be said of our church, "Jesus did not do many miracles there because of their lack of faith."

But what happens if we believe and then nothing happens? Most of us have been there. We may not have big faith for fear of being let down again. My son, who has had his fair share of significant disappointments, put it to me like this: "I believe with all my heart in Jesus' power to work miracles and I pray accordingly. If my prayers are not answered then I am absolutely confident that Jesus has a better way. So my faith in Jesus continues to grow whatever happens." That's what big faith looks like.

FAITH-FILLED PRAYER FOR REVIVAL

Personal Revival: That I will have a greater hunger to live close to Jesus and to hear and obey his voice.

Church Revival: That we will inspire and encourage each other to follow Jesus with all our hearts.

National Revival: That God will release the people of our nation from their oppression and open their eyes to the grace and freedom of the gospel.



DAY FOUR

MAINTAINING FAITH

DAY 4 - JESUS ON MOUNTAIN-MOVING FAITH AND PRAYER

THURSDAY JUNE 9: MATTHEW 14:22-33 – MAINTAINING FAITH

MATT 14:22 Immediately Jesus made the disciples get into the boat and go on ahead of him to the other side, while he dismissed the crowd. ²³ After he had dismissed them, he went up on a mountainside by himself to pray. Later that night, he was there alone, ²⁴ and the boat was already a considerable distance from land, buffeted by the waves because the wind was against it.

²⁵ Shortly before dawn Jesus went out to them, walking on the lake. ²⁶ When the disciples saw him walking on the lake, they were terrified. “It’s a ghost,” they said, and cried out in fear. ²⁷ But Jesus immediately said to them: “Take courage! It is I. Don’t be afraid.”

²⁸ “Lord, if it’s you,” Peter replied, “tell me to come to you on the water.” ²⁹ “Come,” he said.

Then Peter got down out of the boat, walked on the water and came toward Jesus. ³⁰ But when he saw the wind, he was afraid and, beginning to sink, cried out, “Lord, save me!”

³¹ Immediately Jesus reached out his hand and caught him. “**You of little faith,**” he said, “why did you doubt?” ³² And when they climbed into the boat, the wind died down. ³³ Then those who were in the boat worshiped him, saying, “Truly you are the Son of God.”

This is a story I find difficult to comprehend. I’ve seen God do some pretty incredible things and I have no trouble imagining Jesus stopping a storm. But walking over the surface of a turbulent lake? That is downright weird and impossible. It just shows how powerful Jesus was, even while in human flesh. He was completely dominant over the forces of nature. Imagine him waltzing over the top of the raging water to help out his friends stuck in a boat in the storm. Jesus blows my mind. I take heart in the fact that the disciples who had just seen Jesus feed 5000 plus people from 5 bread rolls and two sardines, felt the same way. They were terrified. They had no idea what was going on.

Then there was bold, brash, brave, believing Peter. Never one to shrink back, he wanted part of the action. With sky-high faith, Peter courageously asked to walk across the water to Jesus rather than wait for him to reach the boat. I have no idea what he thought would happen once he got to Jesus. I guess he didn’t even consider that. Jesus was out there in the waves and Peter really wanted to be with him.





DAY FOUR

MAINTAINING FAITH

So when Jesus said, “Come,” Peter jumped straight in. And for a while it was incredible. We’re not told how far he walked, but it was enough for Matthew to comment that he really was walking on the water. But it didn’t last. Maybe Peter could have made it to Jesus on a clear, still night, but once he took his eyes off Jesus and felt the power of the hurricane and saw the size of the waves, he was gone. Down he went like a lead sinker.

Peter did not lack faith like the villagers in Nazareth (last devotion), he just couldn’t maintain faith. His initial faith in Jesus was huge. I don’t know of any other human being who has walked on water. That’s incredible. But his faith dissipated quickly in challenging circumstances. Jesus calls this “little faith.” It comes and goes. It believes and then doubts. It trusts and then worries. It motivates but can’t sustain. Little faith is better than no faith, but it wavers far too much to be called big faith.

Peter’s experience is familiar to many of us. We have moments of great faith when we believe with our whole heart and pray fervently for God’s intervention. We hear Jesus’ call and jump out of the boat. But reality hits, nothing changes, problems emerge, things may even appear worse. Suddenly, it all seems so impossible, and our faith sinks just like Peter. It’s so hard to hold on to big faith in such a broken, tumultuous world.

The solution to “little faith” is obvious in the passage. Our faith explodes when we keep our eyes on Jesus and his power and his promises and his sovereignty and his call to trust. Our faith implodes when we focus on the waves and the impossibilities of our visions and requests. Keeping our eyes on Jesus sounds straightforward, but as Peter found, it is hugely challenging when the big waves are swamping us. But as you keep your eyes on Jesus and his grace and power, you’ll be surprised how quickly little faith becomes big faith.

FAITH-FILLED PRAYER FOR REVIVAL

Personal Revival: That I will have a greater boldness to speak of Jesus and to experience his power.

Church Revival: That we might have a deeper concern for our community and those in need.

National Revival: That God’s people will be filled with new love and boldness and power.



DAY FIVE

PERSISTENT FAITH

DAY 5 - JESUS ON MOUNTAIN-MOVING FAITH AND PRAYER

FRI JUNE 10: MATTHEW 15:21-28 – PERSISTENT FAITH

MATT 15:21 Leaving that place, Jesus withdrew to the region of Tyre and Sidon. ²²A Canaanite woman from that vicinity came to him, crying out, “Lord, Son of David, have mercy on me! My daughter is demon-possessed and suffering terribly.”

²³Jesus did not answer a word. So his disciples came to him and urged him, “Send her away, for she keeps crying out after us.”

²⁴He answered, “I was sent only to the lost sheep of Israel.”

²⁵The woman came and knelt before him. “Lord, help me!” she said.

²⁶He replied, “It is not right to take the children’s bread and toss it to the dogs.”

²⁷“Yes it is, Lord,” she said. “Even the dogs eat the crumbs that fall from their master’s table.” ²⁸Then Jesus said to her, “Woman, **you have great faith!** Your request is granted.” And her daughter was healed at that moment.

Jesus has finished his powerful ministry in the Galilean region. The people there have had their opportunity. He has withdrawn to Gentile territory before a final push through Judea and on to his final destination, Jerusalem. Maybe he was getting away from the threats of Herod Antipas. Maybe he needed a break to prepare for what lay ahead. Whatever the reason, for a short time Jesus sequestered himself in foreign territory where he was less well known.

But a Canaanite woman recognised Jesus and asked for help. It seems that Jesus was not too keen to get involved. I know how he felt. When I’m on holidays, I’m reluctant to give too much time to any problems that arise in my ministry back at home. It’s not that I don’t care, I just need some space to replenish and refresh.

So Jesus brushed off this lady. He was not in Gentile territory to drum up more followers. They were not his calling or target. In God’s time, they would be reached by Christian gospel missionaries, but this was not their time. Jesus had come as the Suffering Servant to save Israel. God’s intention was to reach the Jewish people first and through them to save the world. Jesus’ boundaries were strong. Of course he cared, but he would not be distracted. This was not the time for a Gentile.





DAY FIVE

PERSISTENT FAITH

However, this woman would just not give up. There was a temple for Eshmun, a pagan god of healing, just up the road, but she knew she needed Jesus to heal her daughter. The woman employed every tool at her disposal. She kept crying out so that she could not be ignored. She used the Jewish title, “Son of David,” for Jesus, showing that she understood his Messianic role. She humbly knelt before Jesus in obeisance and called him “Lord.” She parried his seeming dismissive words with the theological insight that God’s intention was also to bless the Gentiles (the dogs that eat the crumbs). This was a persistent and insightful and godly Canaanite woman and Jesus knew it. He marvelled at her great faith in him. He could not resist it. And he miraculously healed her daughter.

Big faith is persistent. It is not put off by disappointment or setbacks or even the seeming silence of God. Big faith is determined to persevere until Jesus responds. Sometimes he says, “No.” That’s okay. That’s his call. We trust Jesus. But until then, big faith keeps pushing and pushing, holding on to the biblical truth that God loves to give good gifts to his people. If you think that it is rude or faith-less to keep asking Jesus to work in power, read this passage again and hear Jesus’ response to the Canaanite lady’s persistence, “Woman, you have great faith! Your request is granted.”

FAITH-FILLED PRAYER FOR REVIVAL

Personal Revival: That I will have a growing confidence that God will work in power through my life.

Church Revival: That God’s Spirit will fill our times of worship and fellowship and that we will see the impact of his presence.

National Revival: That our national and state leaders will have good and humble hearts and will promote godly values with wisdom.



DAY SIX

MOUNTAIN-MOVING FAITH

DAY 6 - JESUS ON MOUNTAIN-MOVING FAITH AND PRAYER

SAT JUNE 11: MATTHEW 17:14-20 – MOUNTAIN-MOVING FAITH

MATT 17:14 When they came to the crowd, a man approached Jesus and knelt before him. **15** “Lord, have mercy on my son,” he said. “He has seizures and is suffering greatly. He often falls into the fire or into the water. **16** I brought him to your disciples, but they could not heal him.”

17 “You **unbelieving** and perverse generation,” Jesus replied, “how long shall I stay with you? How long shall I put up with you? Bring the boy here to me.” **18** Jesus rebuked the demon, and it came out of the boy, and he was healed at that moment.

19 Then the disciples came to Jesus in private and asked, “Why couldn’t we drive it out?”

20 He replied, “Because you have **so little faith**. Truly I tell you, if you have **faith as small as a mustard seed**, you can say to this mountain, ‘Move from here to there,’ and it will move. Nothing will be impossible for you.”

Jesus had just experienced possibly the highest point of his ministry. His glory had become obvious, and his Father had expressed his deep love for and pleasure in him. Then he came down the mountain to this. Back to reality. His disciples were struggling over an exorcism gone wrong. They just couldn’t budge an evil spirit in the suffering boy.

There were three types of faith that Jesus described in his response. First there was *unbelief* (17:17). This didn’t apply to the father (he was desperate for help) or the disciples (they had some faith), so Jesus must have been referring to the gathered crowd. By this point in Jesus’ ministry, there were a lot of critics in the mob. Some were religious leaders who were jealous of Jesus. Others were ordinary people who were not satisfied with Jesus’ trajectory. To Jesus, the crowd was typical of this generation of Jews. They completely lacked faith in him.

These unbelievers were pleased with the disciples’ lack of spiritual authority. It confirmed their theories about Jesus. The crowd was probably critiquing and heckling the disciples as they desperately tried to help the boy. Despite all the evidence of Jesus’ authority, all they had seen and heard, they remained unbelievers. It was so frustrating for Jesus. What more could he do?



DAY SIX

MOUNTAIN-MOVING FAITH

Second, there was the “*little faith*” of the disciples (17:20). We have already come across this term in Jesus’ description of Peter’s faith (14:31). It wasn’t little in terms of its size. Peter walked on water. That takes big faith. It was little because of its inconsistency. This is how Jesus described the disciples’ problem - so little faith. Jesus had previously sent them out on a mission to drive out evil spirits and heal every disease (10:1) and they had been very successful. So the disciples were experienced exorcists and healers. But this time, they just didn’t believe. Maybe it was the critical crowd. Maybe it was a really tough demon. Maybe they were exhausted. Maybe they weren’t praying (Mk. 9:29). But their faith wavered. They doubted. We’ve all been there. So confident of Jesus’ power to work one moment and plagued by doubts and past disappointments the next. That’s little faith.

Third, there was *tiny faith* (17:20). A mustard seed (about 1mm in diameter) was a tiny seed. That’s the size of the faith the disciples needed to move a mountain. I wouldn’t get too carried away about moving mountains. Jesus didn’t literally do it and as far as I know no-one else ever has. Moving mountains just represents a complete impossibility. So according to Jesus, the size of your faith doesn’t matter. That’s a welcome relief. What matters is whether it’s placed in the authority of Jesus and doesn’t waver. That’s it. That’s the way the impossible becomes reality. Small but steady faith in the authority and power of Jesus. The size of your faith is immaterial. It’s the unswerving focus on Jesus that counts.

FAITH-FILLED PRAYER FOR REVIVAL

Personal Revival: That I will have a vigorous and secure hope in God’s promises and God’s future.

Church Revival: That God will work in power among us through the preaching of the Word and prayers of the church.

National Revival: That the Spirit will bring unity and peace to our nation. That criticism and division and arrogance will be overwhelmed by the grace of Jesus.



DAY SEVEN

BELIEVING AND RECEIVING

DAY 7 - JESUS ON MOUNTAIN-MOVING FAITH AND PRAYER

SUN JUNE 12: MATTHEW 21:18-22 – BELIEVING AND RECEIVING

MATT 21:18 Early in the morning, as Jesus was on his way back to the city, he was hungry. ¹⁹ Seeing a fig tree by the road, he went up to it but found nothing on it except leaves. Then he said to it, “May you never bear fruit again!” Immediately the tree withered.

²⁰ When the disciples saw this, they were amazed. “How did the fig tree wither so quickly?” they asked.

²¹ Jesus replied, “Truly I tell you, **if you have faith and do not doubt**, not only can you do what was done to the fig tree, but also you can say to this mountain, ‘Go, throw yourself into the sea,’ and it will be done. ²² **If you believe**, you will receive whatever you ask for in prayer.”

The die was now cast. Jesus was in the vicinity of Jerusalem and his final rejection and crucifixion were looming. Jesus’ cursing of the fig tree was not a fit of pique due to its lack of fruit. It was a symbolic prophetic action displaying the truth that because of their lack of spiritual response and fruit, Israel would be judged by God (like the fruitless fig tree).

But our focus is on Jesus’ statements about faith. At first glance they appear to be concerning. It seems that Jesus was promising that human faith would not only produce miracles but would result in every single prayer being answered. At face value, this is dangerous territory. A young pastor emailed me today: “Yesterday I was praying with a young adult girl who had just been diagnosed with a serious disease. Her boyfriend had been hinting to her that if she got her words right and her faith right then she had the power to be rid of her disease.” That theology is a recipe for guilt and pain and disillusionment. Not at all like real faith.

One of the clearest biblical examples of a faith prayer not being answered was Paul’s prayer for healing in 2 Cor. 12:8. Three times he pleaded for Jesus to release him, but Jesus said, “No. I have better plans for you.” So what do Jesus’ statements about faith mean here?

We need to understand what faith is. It has two main components:



DAY SEVEN

BELIEVING AND RECEIVING

1. Faith that Jesus is in charge and has the power to do anything. This has been our focus in these devotions. It doesn't have to be a huge faith, just a consistent even stubborn belief and trust that Jesus can do what we ask of him. In a secular, prosperous world this kind of faith easily diminishes. We desperately need to believe for more as Jesus says in this Scripture.
2. Faith that Jesus is in charge and has the power to do best/right. In a broken world, God's best is not always evident to us. Paul thought that healing was best, but God knew that weakness would be better. We think that a particular job will be best, but we don't get it and find that God has much better plans for us. Sometimes we see this in hindsight. Sometimes we have no idea what God is doing. But Jesus really does what is best. Faith means trusting him and not limiting him to our agenda.

Both these aspects of faith are essential. If we only believe that God can do anything, we will try to press him into our agenda. What we think is best. If we only believe that God does what is best, we will not bother to believe for his miraculous power to work and we'll miss out on moving mountains.

But if we believe with all our heart that Jesus will do more than we could ever imagine and also believe that Jesus will always do what is best for us and his kingdom, then our prayers are answered, and mountains end up in the sea. When Jesus said to the father of the demonised boy (see last devotion), "Everything is possible for one who believes" (Mk. 9:23), the father's response was "I do believe help me overcome my unbelief." That sounds like a great prayer to finish these devotions. Please pray it with me.


FAITH-FILLED PRAYER FOR REVIVAL

Personal Revival: That I will have a greater compassion for the lost and a deeper desire to serve and save them.

Church Revival: That there will be a harvest of new Christians in our community who accept Jesus as Lord and Saviour.

National Revival: That COVID and other national challenges will produce a growing need for God and a deep desire to fill our spiritual void.



The background of the page is a landscape photograph. On the left, a portion of a windmill with several blades is visible. The middle ground shows a flat, open field, possibly a farm or a plain. In the distance, there are low mountains or hills under a clear sky. The overall color palette is muted, with blues, greys, and earthy tones.

FASTING GUIDE



WHAT DOES THE BIBLE TEACH ABOUT FASTING?

BIBLICAL FASTING INVOLVES ABSTAINING FROM EATING (AND/OR DRINKING) FOR SPIRITUAL PURPOSES:

In the Old Testament, Israel celebrated certain annual fasts, the most prominent being the Day of Atonement. There were also occasional fasts tied to specific historical events, sometimes individual and sometimes corporate. Here are a few of the occasions for fasting: at a time of grief (1 Sam. 31:13; Nehemiah 1:4), at a time of repentance (1 Sam 7:6; 1 Kings 21:27), as an expression of humility (Ezra 8:21; Psalm 69:10) and as an expression of a need for God's guidance and help. All of these fasts express a common dependence on God. Several New Testament passages give us insight about fasting.

FASTING TEACHES US THAT GOD'S WORD NOURISHES US:

Matthew 4:1-4 records the only example of Jesus fasting, just prior to his being tempted in the wilderness. He faced temptation with these words "Man shall not live on bread alone, but on every word that proceeds out of the mouth of God." Jesus is quoting Deuteronomy 8:3-5 which talks about the 40 years Israel spent in the wilderness, depending daily on manna to sustain them. He says that God humbled them and let them be hungry in order to teach them to depend on God's Word to sustain them. By His example of fasting, Jesus reminds us that food alone can't sustain us. We need to be nourished by God's Word.

FASTING TEACHES US THAT DOING GOD'S WILL SUSTAINS US:

John 4:31-35 records Jesus' encounter with the woman at the well. When the disciples return they encourage Jesus to eat. He responds by saying "I have food to eat that you know not of," then He adds "My food is to do the will of the Father." Again, Jesus reminds us that food alone is not enough. We are sustained by doing God's will.

FASTING TEACHES US THAT JESUS HIMSELF SUSTAINS US:

In John 6:48-50 Jesus says "I am the bread of life. Your fathers ate the manna in the wilderness, and they died. This is the bread which comes down out of heaven, so that one may eat of it and not die." We see this pictured symbolically in the bread and the cup of the Lord's Supper. Jesus is the source of eternal life. Fasting is feasting on Jesus. Jesus commanded that fasting would be a part of His disciple's spiritual life. In Matthew 6:16-18, He says "when you fast," not "if you fast." He warns us not to fast to impress people, but to be near to the heart of God.





FASTING IS DESIGNED TO INTENSIFY OUR DEPENDENCE ON GOD BY WEAKENING OUR DEPENDENCE ON FOOD AND OTHER THINGS.

THE PURPOSE OF FASTING

Fasting reveals and heals our dependence on food (and other things) to fill the discomfort caused by low self-esteem, unfulfilling work, unloving relationships, uncontrollable circumstances, etc. It removes the false peace derived from the pleasure of eating. Richard Foster, in His Classic Celebration of Discipline, says, "More than any other discipline, fasting reveals the things that control us. This is a wonderful benefit to the true disciple who longs to be transformed into the image of Jesus Christ. We cover up what is inside us with food and other good things, but in fasting these things surface. If pride controls us, it will be revealed almost immediately. David writes, "I humbled my soul with fasting" (Psalm 69: 10). Anger, bitterness, jealousy, strife, fear- if they are within us, they will surface during fasting."

Fasting teaches us we can go without getting what we want and survive.

Fasting can free us from having to have what we want. Therefore, fasting can teach moderation or self-control, not only in relation to food, but in other areas as well. It teaches contentment (1 Timothy 6:6).

Fasting expresses and deepens our hunger for God.

Richard Foster says, "Fasting reminds us that we are sustained "by every word that proceeds from the mouth of God: (Matt. 4:4). Food does not sustain us; God sustains us. In Christ, "All things hold together" (Col. 1: 17). Therefore, in experiences of fasting we are not so much abstaining from food as we are feasting on the word of God and on Christ Himself. Fasting is feasting." Fasting for other reasons, such as a "spiritual disguise" for losing weight, is an aberration to Biblical fasting. Fasting to even appear spiritual to others is more akin to the Pharisees than Jesus' instructions. Fasting must always, first and foremost, center on God. It must be about Him.



STEP 1: CLARIFY THE PURPOSE OF YOUR FAST

Why are you fasting? (For the purpose of the 21 Days, see above.) Ask the Holy Spirit to clarify His leading and objectives for your prayer fast. This will enable you to pray more specifically and strategically. Fasting is God-led and God-initiated. That means that He fuels a desire to fast and pray. He loves it when we fast.

STEP 2: SPECIFY THE NATURE OF YOUR FAST

Pray about the kind of fast you should undertake. Jesus implied that all of His followers should fast. (Matthew 6:16-18; 9:14, 15) For Him it was a matter of when believers would fast, not if they would do it.

Before you fast, decide the following up front:

- How long you will fast - one meal, one day, one week, several weeks, certain days (Beginners should start slowly, building up to longer fasts)
- The type of fast God wants you to undertake - discussed in the Types of Fasts section below.
- What physical or social activities you will restrict
- How much time each day you will devote to prayer and God's Word

STEP 3: PREPARE YOUR HEART, MIND, AND BODY FOR YOUR FAST

Fasting is not a spur-of-the-moment thing. It is planned and we must prepare. The very foundation of fasting and prayer is repentance. Un-confessed sin can hinder your prayers. Here are several things you can do to prepare your heart:

- Fasting requires reasonable precautions. Consult your physician first, especially if you take prescription medication or have a chronic ailment. Some persons should never fast without professional supervision.
- Do not rush into your fast. Prepare your body. Eat smaller meals before starting a fast. Avoid high-fat and sugary foods. Eat raw fruit and vegetables for two days before starting a fast. Physical preparation makes the drastic change in your eating routine a little easier so that you can turn your full attention to the Lord in prayer.
- Prepare your heart and mind remembering that God is your Father and He loves you and is for you.
- Confess every sin that the Holy Spirit calls to your remembrance and accept God's forgiveness (1 John 1:9). Seek forgiveness from all whom you have offended, and forgive all who have hurt you. (Mark 11:25; Luke 11:4; 17:3,4) Make restitution as the Holy Spirit leads you.
- Surrender your life fully to Jesus Christ. (Romans 12:1,2) Meditate on the attributes of God, His love, sovereignty, power, wisdom, faithfulness, grace, compassion, and others (Psalm 48:9, 10; 103:1-8, 11-13).
- Begin your time of fasting and prayer with an expectant heart. (Hebrews 11:6)
- Do not underestimate spiritual opposition. Satan sometimes intensifies the natural battle between body and spirit. (Galatians 5:16, 17)
- Finally, and of deep importance, Jesus instructs us in Matthew to not let others know about your fasting. The strict details of your fast should not be something you constantly talk about to others. It should remain between you and God.





TYPES OF FASTS

Now that we have explored the Old and New Testament teaching and instruction on fasting, we can proceed to discuss specific kinds of fasts. Let us begin with the helpful words of Richard Foster:

“AS WITH ALL THE DISCIPLINES, A PROGRESSION SHOULD BE OBSERVED; IT IS WISE TO LEARN TO WALK WELL BEFORE WE TRY TO RUN.”

Since the purpose of fasting, as we saw above, is to focus on God, to humble ourselves and to remind ourselves that we are sustained by every word that proceeds from the mouth of God, then the task in fasting is connecting our “going without” to “hungering for God.” This takes time, focus and prayer in itself. Please do not expect to be an “expert” at fasting right away. Fasting is a discipline that can take a very long time to understand well. Also, do not let this fact deter you or intimidate you.

Fasting is not unlike a beautifully written masterpiece of literature. It is simple enough for a youth to understand and enjoy, and yet magnificently rich enough for the scholar to devote his/her entire life to.

ABSTAINING FROM CERTAIN TYPES OF FOOD (MEAT, SWEETS, ETC.) – DANIEL 10:3

This type is a good first step for beginners to fast or those with health needs and special or restrictive diets. Choose to abstain from something like breads, sweets, sodas, coffee or even red meat. Perhaps spend some time reading through Daniel’s fast in Daniel chapter 1 and chapter 10. Stick to only fruits and vegetables like Daniel, or try something similar.

Determine the timing and duration of your fast and begin. You may choose to go without this specific type of food on only certain days like Fridays, or you may go without during the weekdays only or perhaps every day. Finally, choose the duration of your fast. This community wide fast is 21 days but that does not mean you must go without for all of the 21 days. Determine the timing and duration ahead of time and pray through it.



ABSTAINING FROM ALL FOOD (ESTHER 4:16; ACTS 9:9)

This kind of fast is more difficult but can be broken up by timing and duration. This seems to be the most prevalent of the fasts we see in the Bible. It is also the most intimidating, but refuse to let it scare you. Fasting from all food is not scary if you determine beforehand when you will do so and for how long.

Here are some ideas:

- Start slowly. Begin with fasting for only a part of a day (lunch, or lunch and dinner). Do this for one day a week, or perhaps three days a week. You determine the timing and duration. Take a step of faith. Fasting is risky and involves our faith.
- Next, try fasting from food but not beverages. This means that according to your timing and duration, you would not eat any solid foods but only water, juices, smoothies or perhaps simple soup broths.
- Do this for the first one or two weeks. Devote the time that you normally would eating to Scripture reading and prayer. Focus on Jesus' statements about food.
- Next try a 24-hour fast. This means that you get up and eat a good breakfast and drink only water or juice until the following breakfast the next day. Set aside specific time, during normal meal times if possible, to pray and seek God. Finally, you may progress to a two or three day fast. For some, progression may lead to a multi- day, even multi-week fast. But remember the purpose of your fast.

ABSTAINING FROM THINGS BESIDES FOOD (DANIEL 6:18)

The king's voluntary "fasting" from entertainment in the time of Daniel helps us further understand yet another type of fast.

Fasting from non-food items like entertainment can be particularly helpful and accessible for everyone.

Think of abstaining from television, social media, video games, all reading except the Bible, music, texting, etc. for the duration of your fast. This can be a very powerful decision even as a supplement to food fasts.





Choosing your fasting plan is a very personal decision. We are all at different places in our walk with God and our spirituality should never be a cause for comparison or competition. There is nothing more “inherently spiritual” about one type of fast as opposed to another. Your personal fast should present a level of challenge to it, but know your body, know your options, and most importantly, seek God in prayer about this and follow what the Holy Spirit leads you to do. It’s also important to not let what you eat or do not eat become the focus of your fast. This is a time to disconnect enough with your regular patterns and habits in order to connect more closely to God.

**NO MATTER WHAT KIND OF FAST YOU CHOOSE,
AND EVEN IF YOU CHOOSE NOT TO FAST,
PLEASE SEEK GOD IN PRAYER AND READING.**

24-SEVEN
PRAYER WEEK

A banner for "24-Seven Prayer Week" featuring a background image of a windmill. The text "24-SEVEN" is in large, bold, white letters, and "PRAYER WEEK" is in large, white, outlined letters below it.



24
SEVEN
PRAYER WEEK 24/7

6-12 JUNE



Bracken Ridge

BAPTIST CHURCH

6-12 JUNE

