

LMS 60.2—62.6

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⁹ Heb. *too high for me*
¹⁰ Heb. *heritage unto those &c.*
¹¹ Or, *as other-*
¹² Heb. *be slain &c.* ¹³ Heb. *be*

21 DAYS OF PRAYER AND FASTING



Devotional Journal
January 2020

This devotional was written by a team of individuals who are committed to seeing people engage in God's Word, His mission, and experiencing the presence of Jesus every day.



21 *DAYS* *OF PRAYER AND FASTING*

When we intentionally disconnect from our regular patterns and habits, it disrupts our usual patterns of thinking. No longer in autopilot when we fast, it helps us more readily pay attention to God and connect more intimately with Him. Fasting is a practice that draws us into a deeper awareness of His voice and His presence. We like to start off a new year with a time of prayer and fasting so we can begin the year with diligent focus on Jesus and His plans for us.

FASTING



Why do we choose to fast?

Luke 4:2-4 (verse 4)

Jesus answered (the devil), "It is written: Man shall not live on bread alone."

Jesus' fasting occurred before he was tempted by the devil in the wilderness. Jesus had not eaten for forty days and was hungry. Jesus resisted the devil by quoting scripture from Deuteronomy. I find it interesting that Moses also did not eat or drink water while on Mount Sinai, for forty days! (Exodus 34:48). Since Jesus is who we will put our trust in, shouldn't we also follow his example by fasting like he did?

The focus of fasting is described in (Matthew 6:17-18.) It basically says we should fast and pray in secret, not openly display it. Following these scriptures, comes with a reward! Additional scriptures on fasting: (Acts 13:2; Daniel 10:3; Joel 2:12, and Acts 14:23.)

I actually fasted in Israel and Jordan in November! I was on a tour of the Holy Land, and determined to mainly eat fruit and vegetables in order to avoid eating meat. When I prayed at the Wailing Wall in Jerusalem, I was reminded of all the promises I had been given by God. Tears of gratitude flowed down my cheeks!

Question to consider: How can fasting, praying and petitioning God help us to live correctly?

Week 1 Day 2

Taught and modeled by Jesus | Matt 9:14,15 and Matt 6:16-18

Practiced by New Testament leaders | Acts 13:2,3 and Acts 14:23

Directed by the Holy Spirit to advance Heaven's objective, God's "will be done on Earth, as in Heaven" | Matt 6:10

Jesus fasted during his 40 days in the wilderness. He said we would fast after he returned to heaven. Spiritual leaders of the baby church in Antioch prayed and fasted before sending out a church planting team to the gentiles. As a follower of Jesus, prayer and fasting is part of our spiritual practice. Jesus' call for us to share the Gospel with others is fueled by fasting and prayer. We don't fast to prove ourselves. We fast to empower our obedience to Jesus.

What have you fasted from to join the 21 day fast?

Food* | Sweets | Alcohol | Screens: Media & Games

Other _____

Write your prayer list supporting your fasting:

Who:

What:

Local:

Global:

More about fasting:

https://resources.foursquare.org/fasting_the_feast_that_frees/

Fasting is a perfect time to remember who Jesus is. First, let's look at his humanity. He was born of the virgin Mary (Matthew 1:18-25), circumcised on the eighth day (Luke 2:21), dedicated in the temple (Luke 2:22-35), and grew in wisdom as a child (Luke 2:40). As a man, Jesus displayed the emotions and physical limitations of a human. He experienced compassion for a widow (Luke 7:13), sorrow over Jerusalem (Luke 19:41), righteous anger over the greed displayed in the temple court (Luke 19:45). Jesus displayed fatigue (John 4:6), felt hunger (Matthew 21:18). Jesus was beaten by the men who arrested Him and ultimately crucified and killed (Mark 15). His suffering and death was the sacrifice for our sins.

But of course, Jesus was also God, even though He lived as a Human on earth (a great mystery). The gospel of John declares: *In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God, and the Word was God. He was with God in the beginning. Through him all things were made; without him nothing was made that has been made. In him was life, and that life was the light of all mankind. The light shines in the darkness, and the darkness has not overcome it.* (John 1:1-5) Jesus with a word, drove out demons (Mark 5:6-13), calmed the storm (Luke 8:22-25). Jesus walked on water, healed the sick, gave sight to the blind and raised a widow's son, a dead girl and Lazarus back to life. Finally, Jesus demonstrates His divinity by conquering death being resurrected and appearing to His disciples over a 40-day period (Acts 1:1-3). We can better understand the character of God through the life of Jesus, but it is His resurrection that confirms His divinity. Our Christian faith rises and falls on this fact.

Take time today to meditate on all the characteristics of Jesus. **Which ones have had the greatest impact on your life this year?**

Week 1 Day 4

Who Do You Say I am?

Matthew 16:13-17

When Jesus came to the region of Caesarea Philippi, he asked his disciples, "Who do people say the Son of Man is?" They replied, "Some say John the Baptist; others say Elijah; and still others, Jeremiah or one of the prophets." "But what about you?" he asked. "Who do you say I am?" Simon Peter answered, "You are the Messiah, the Son of the living God." Jesus replied, "Blessed are you, Simon son of Jonah, for this was not revealed to you by flesh and blood, but by my Father in heaven.

Jesus the Son of Man also referred to by the common crowd as a Jewish preacher, a religious leader, a Galilean Jew, a Rabbi, a Prophet, the Creator, a Person, a Messenger, John the Baptist, Elijah or Jeremiah. Jesus the Son of God. Many names in the Bible describe other elements of Jesus nature and character as people encountered him in a personal and relational way.

To John, Jesus is known as our Advocate (1 John 2:1), Faithful and Truth (Rev. 19:11).

To Paul, He is our Deliverer (1 Thess. 1:10), our Mediator (1 Tim. 2:5), our Hope (1 Tim. 1:1), our Peace (Eph. 2:14), and the Rock (1 Cor. 10:4).

To Luke the doctor, Jesus was described as our Savior (Luke 2:11).

To the prophet Isaiah, He is our Wonderful Counselor, Mighty God, Everlasting Father, and Prince of Peace (Is. 9:6).

What matters most is not what everyone else believes, but who do you believe Jesus is. As you draw near to Jesus in these 21 days of fasting ask the Father to reveal himself to you in a personal and relational way.

Why I follow Jesus.

Romans 5:6 (NASB)

For while we were still helpless, at the right time Christ died for the ungodly. For one will hardly die for a righteous man; though perhaps for the good man someone would dare even to die. But God demonstrates His own love toward us, in that while we were yet sinners, Christ died for us.

I have been a follower of Christ for over three decades now, but only within the last 5 years have I found the ability to rest within His loving embrace. I lived within a constant struggle of image control and cycles of sin and healing, but never truly believing that I am loved by Him - Father God - Just as I am.

Once I understand that life in Christ is truly about "life with Christ", whom accepts me and extends perfect love to me in my darkest and sin drenched hours, I transition from a lifestyle of trying to measure up to a life of true transformation. As I open my heart to Him, confessing my sin and knowing that his love remains unwavering, I can grow within His fellowship and heal from the sin which has been entangling me. He has never discarded you!

Why do you follow Jesus?

What is the most significant event in your life where you experienced Jesus at work?

Week 1 Day 6

Matthew 11:28-30

Come to me, all who labor and are heavy laden, and I will give you rest. Take my yoke upon you, and learn from me, for I am gentle and lowly in heart, and you will find rest for your souls. For my yoke is easy, and my burden is light.

I follow Jesus because He has transformed my life. He has given me hope and a future; a destiny of eternity with God. I have 44 years of experience of walking with Jesus; sometimes following, sometimes trying to lead. Every day I thank Him for loving me and redeeming me and my family.

My encounter with the Lord occurred during a period of extended time alone, praying for the spiritual retreat we were having our church. After about 20 minutes of prayer, I realized that I was living a lie. I did not really know Jesus. I cried in desperation, Lord God if you are real, reveal yourself to me. Suddenly, I felt a warmth come over me and a peace, as though I was wrapped in God's love and acceptance. I tearfully asked for forgiveness for my selfishness, my sins and declared Jesus as my Lord and savior. Because of that day, my marriage was healed and my family experienced transformation. As I continued to cooperate with the Holy Spirit's move in my life and address the sin distortions in my character, I experienced Kingdom living.

How has your Life changed because of your commitment to follow Jesus?

What areas of your life have been transformed?

What area do you most need the Lord's transformational work?

Lift up your praise to the Lord for what He has done in your life and ask for a renewed spirit for change in your life.

What was the highlight of this week of fasting? In what ways has this devotional helped you during your fast?

Psalm 121:1-2
I lift up my eyes to the hills. From where does my help come? My help comes from the Lord, who made heaven and earth.

***HEARING
GOD***

Hearing God through the Bible

Jesus made it clear that His plan was for us to hear Him directly. That's one reason we are fasting--to hear Him more clearly. He said in John 10:27 *"My sheep hear my voice; and I know them and they follow me."* (RSV) What a great promise for every Christian this is! But how can we be sure it's God we're listening to? There are so many voices that rattle around in our heads. Which voices are from our Shepherd? How can we tell?

Foremost, His voice speaking to us always agrees with, and is never contrary to Scripture. God never changes and His word never changes. He doesn't have new ideas for this century or a "special" circumstance. He doesn't need to. The Bible is always fresh and sufficient. If a voice is telling you to leave your spouse for your neighbor's spouse, you can be sure it's not God speaking to you. You can be sure, that is, if you're familiar with what the Bible teaches about marriage.

If we read the Bible regularly, and memorize verses that are meaningful to us, or participate in a Bible study, or life group to better understand and apply the scriptures to our life we will be able to detect when it's our Shepard's voice. It is He who is guiding us, comforting us, providing answers, confronting us, blessing us, laughing with us, or grieving with us. All this are the promises found in the Bible. If you have not established a pattern of reading the Bible regularly, use this fast as a time to develop a daily reading time. As you listen to the voice within that is the Holy Spirit, the comforter, your wisdom, discernment and understanding of truth will grow.

All Scripture is God-breathed and is useful for teaching, rebuking, correcting and training in righteousness, so that the servant of God may be thoroughly equipped for every good work. 2 Timothy 3:16-17

Week 2 Day 2

Hearing God through Prayer

The Bible says He is like a lamp for our feet and a light to our path. Getting familiar with Gods voice requires a two-way communication. Be still and focus on God with a yielding heart and empty ourselves out of everything so that He can pour His wisdom, His direction and His will into us. Rarely does God speak with an audible voice. Although it does happen, it is not the usual way God speaks to His people.

3 Ways God Speaks to His People:

Inner knowing - An inner peace; the peace that surpasses all understanding (Phil. 4:7) This is when you know that you know in your gut that it's what you're supposed to do.

Inner Voice - A whisper to our soul, also known as a still small voice. Elijah heard God's still small voice when he was in the wilderness (I Kings 19:11-13). God's revelation does not have to be overly dramatic it can be a divine silence. It can be a song, a scripture, a quote or phrase. Be open and expecting.

Visuals - Images may be realistic or symbolic also known as visions. For example, there was a time in my life that I worried about my children and their safety so much so that I constantly was in worry. God gave me a visual of a package being sent through mail in bubble wrap and with that visual God spoke to me clearly that as I send them to school, I now put them in His hands and He will protect them and take them to their destination and bring them back home safely. (Also read Jeremiah 1:11-13)

During these 21 days of fasting, ask the Father: What do I need to do to become a better listener?

Worship song recommendation: "I'm Listening" by Chris McClarney

Week 2 Day 4

Hearing God Through Others

For me to hear God through others means being in relationship with them. For me to fulfill my God calling, wise counsel is the wind beneath my wings. Relationship and wise counsel come from my Tuesday morning study buddies. They have walked along side me for six years of recession, melt down, followed by a God calling to be a bridge in the kingdom of God while living in the kingdom of man. We, as a group, have walked together through difficult pregnancies, life threatening illnesses and for some, the end of life. I have found the wisdom in their words; my life breath. It is our shared study and meditation of scripture that ensure our words from God to each other are wise and grace-filled. We let the Holy Spirit do the correcting, John 16:8. God's care for us as a study, comes from shared words reflecting our various backgrounds and experiences. We grow in our walk with God and He equips us to be a light in the darkness.

In the Bible, the book of Proverbs says, *"Those who trust their own insight are foolish, but anyone who walks in wisdom is safe."* 28:26 NIV, and James 3:17 says *"...the wisdom from above is first of all pure. It is also peace loving, gentle at all times, and willing to yield to others. It is full of mercy and the fruit of good deeds. It shows no favoritism and is always sincere."*

Thinking of a time you were seeking God, who in your life had words for you that confirmed or changed what you were hearing?

What in your life makes it difficult to hear God for yourself? Who can you turn to that is a trustworthy Jesus-follower?

Who will you reach out to this week, giving a word of wisdom from God or seeking wisdom from above for yourself?

Hearing God for Encouragement

Read Psalm 27

Within these graphic and powerful 14 verses of poetry in scripture, the psalmist David gives us "The Key to Contending". When the worst of the worst days and situations you could possibly imagine suddenly befall you, there is one thing - one act - one posture which has the very power to deliver you from every attack and tribulation which befalls you. This key, this superpower, this revelation is best summed up in verse 4-5: *"One thing I have asked from the Lord, that shall I seek; That I may dwell in the house of the Lord all the days of my life, To behold the beauty of the Lord and to meditate in His Temple. For in the day of trouble He will conceal me in His tabernacle; In the secret place of His tent He will hide me; He will lift me up on a rock."*

Let this passage serve as a beacon to you in stormy times. God is a lighthouse to you in your storm, beckoning you to Himself, illuminating your path and guarding you from the hazards in your path. Our rescue is found in presence - His presence, when it feels that everything around us has determined our destruction, he embraces us with hope as we lean into the secret place. I can think of no better encouragement that this!

What encouragement do you take from this passage?

Is there a place in your home which you can find solitude and lean into the presence of God?

When you find yourself in the busyness of your daily grind, how can you escape into His presence? Worship? Bible App? Noise cancelling headphones?

Week 2 Day 6

Hearing God for Others and the Church

Romans 10:17

Faith comes by hearing, and hearing by the Word of God.

As important as it is to hear God for yourself, it is equally important to hear God for others and the church. That is why we are part of a community of Christ-followers. God speaks in many ways. Most of the time it happens when you are interacting with others or when you actually ask the Holy Spirit to speak to you in quiet times for those individuals that are around you. You'll know the words are from God because they will be words that will edify, comfort or encourage the individual (1 Corinthians 14:3).

Trust that you are hearing God for the individual, but deliver the words with humility, such as "I think these words are for you". Never use, "The Lord says to you..."

Another application is when you desire to hear God for the church or during a time of praise or prayer you get a word from the Lord for the church. Write the prophetic words, including the appropriate scripture, the Lord may give you. If it is for an individual, give the words to him/her with the warning, "I believe this is from the Lord for you, but you should pray and allow the Lord to confirm it." If the words are for the church give them to one of the pastors so that the word can be discerned before delivered to the church body.

Although the scriptures identify the prophet as an office of the church (Ephesians 4:4), the Holy Spirit may impart to any Christ follower the gift of prophecy (1 Corinthians 12:7-10), for the benefit of others for the moment.

For whom will you prayerfully seek a word from the Lord this week?

***RECOGNIZING
OUR MISSION***

Week 3 Day 4

Take some time and re-read Matthew 28:16-20

Authority can be a pretty challenging word. Authority can be earned, and it can be given. But frequently, when authority is given, it isn't trusted until authority is also earned.

Jesus's great commission at the end of the Gospel of Matthew says, "All authority of heaven and earth has been given to me (Jesus)." The truth is, all of us before we knew Jesus as savior, didn't trust Him. We couldn't see Him, and we couldn't understand why we needed Him. Everything was fine until it wasn't. And it was in those moments that most of us went inward and investigated Jesus's authority. That was when "it" happened, at a church service, small group, or conversation with a believer, we decided to submit to the authority of Jesus.

I'm not sure if you have realized this in your walk, but most of our moments of struggle still have to do with us stepping out of the way of the one with authority and letting Him be in charge. A wise man once said, "The moment you feel the burden is the moment you are deciding to take on the burden that Jesus longs to take from us."

What burden are you currently carrying that you know Jesus wants to take for you?

What is a straightforward way that you can give that burden to Jesus today?
