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WHY FAST?

We are calling on every church member to join our time of prayer and fasting. As we begin another new year, we take time to pray and fast to:

- consecrate ourselves, families, and ministries to God
- thank God for His faithfulness, mercy, and grace
- believe God for victories and breakthroughs in every area of our lives this year

Together, let's dare to believe God for greater things!

Consecrate a fast; call a solemn assembly. Gather the elders and all the inhabitants of the land to the house of the Lord your God, and cry out to the Lord.

JOEL 1:14

We fast because:

- Jesus fasted.
- Fasting is an act of humility and consecration.
- Fasting helps us become sensitive to the Holy Spirit.
- Fasting brings revival.
- Fasting is healthy.

⁶"Is not this the fast that I choose: to loose the bonds of wickedness, to undo the straps of the yoke, to let the oppressed go free, and to break every yoke? ⁷Is it not to share your bread with the hungry and bring the homeless poor into your house; when you see the naked, to cover him, and not to hide yourself from your own flesh?"

ISAIAH 58:6,7

FASTING IS SPIRITUAL PREPARATION

¹And Jesus, full of the Holy Spirit, returned from the Jordan and was led by the Spirit in the wilderness ²for forty days, being tempted by the devil. And he ate nothing during those days. And when they were ended, he was hungry.

LUKE 4:1,2

When Jesus was about to begin His ministry, He was led by the Holy Spirit into the wilderness to be tested. The Spirit led Him to fast to prepare Him for His new assignment. During that time, He was tempted by the devil, but He overcame each temptation that was sent His way (Luke 4:3-13). In fact, He came out of the desert empowered by the Spirit and ready to begin His ministry.

¹⁴And Jesus returned in the power of the Spirit to Galilee, and a report about him went out through all the surrounding country. ¹⁵And he taught in their synagogues, being glorified by all.

LUKE 4:14,15

Whenever God wants to do something new in our lives, He prepares us for it. He calls us into a place like the wilderness and allows us to be tested. We learn here that God usually tests before He invests. The purpose of a test is to promote us for something greater in our lives.

Fasting—which is only possible by God's grace and with His strength—makes us spiritually open to the Holy Spirit. It is a time to allow God to deal with what is really going on in our hearts and souls.

In this time of prayer and fasting, allow God to lead you, strengthen you, and prepare you for what's up ahead. Declare your allegiance and dependence upon Him today. Ask Him for breakthrough upon breakthrough, miracle after miracle, and deliverance upon deliverance for you, your family, your church, and the nation. Dare to believe Him.

A PRACTICAL GUIDE TO PRAYER AND FASTING

PREPARING FOR THE FAST

- **Pray.** Be in faith as you prayerfully and thoughtfully fill out the following pages in this devotional. Write your answered prayers for 2015, and dare to believe God for greater things in 2016. Ask the Holy Spirit for guidance.
- **Commit** to a type of fast. Do not decide on a day-to-day basis. Commit before the fast, and be determined. Fasting options include:
 - water only
 - liquid only
 - one meal only
 - other kinds of fasts (e.g. a combination of these; no TV or social media)
- **Prepare** your body gradually for the fast. Start eating smaller portions and meals made of raw fruits or vegetables two days before Day 1. Avoid food that is high in sugar and fat.
- **Plan** your calendar. Limit physical and social activities during the fast, conserve energy, and spend more time in prayer and reading the Bible.
- **Consult** a physician if you need to. If your situation does not allow you to fast, determine what will work best for you. Such circumstances include pregnancy, a physically demanding profession, and medical conditions.
- **Ask** a family member or friend to be your prayer partner throughout the fast, and list his/her prayer points in this devotional as well.

Then Joshua said to the people, "Consecrate yourselves, for tomorrow the Lord will do wonders among you."

JOSHUA 3:5

WHILE FASTING

- **Thank** God for what He is doing. Be ready to hear and receive direction from Him.
- **Believe** God for a fresh encounter with Him. **Invite** the Holy Spirit to put His finger on specific areas in your life that need to change. Be completely open to God and ready to repent.
- **Seek** God. During mealtime, read the Bible and pray instead. **Join** prayer meetings at your church.
- **Pray** throughout the day. Intercede for your family, church, pastors, nation, campuses, missions . . . Dare to believe God!
- **Drink** plenty of water. **Rest** as much as you can. As your body adjusts to the fast, be ready for temporary bouts of physical weakness and mental annoyances, such as impatience, irritability, and anxiety.

17"But when you fast, anoint your head and wash your face, 18that your fasting may not be seen by others but by your Father who is in secret. And your Father who sees in secret will reward you."

MATTHEW 6:17,18

BREAKING THE FAST

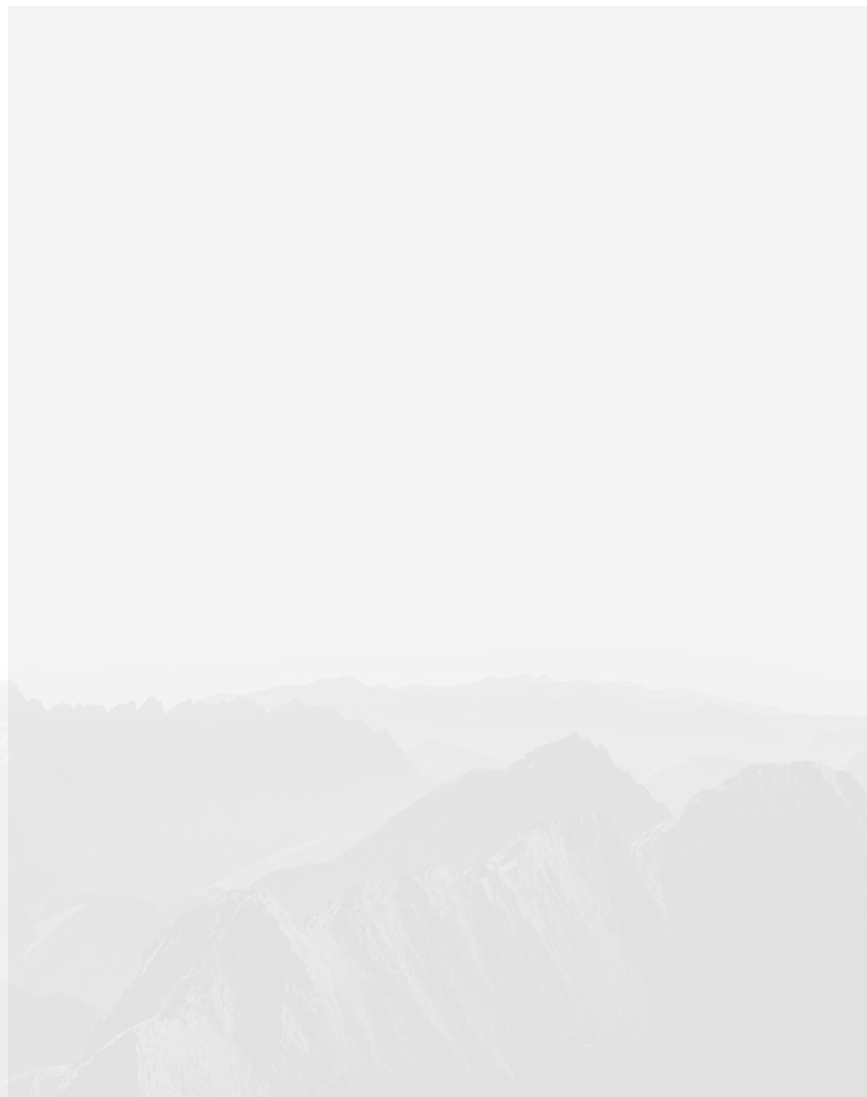
- **Eat** and reintroduce solid food gradually. Break your fast the same way you prepared for it, since your body needs time to adjust to a normal diet. Start with fruits, juices, and salad, then add more vegetables. Eat small portions throughout the day.
- **Pray** and believe God for more. Build from the momentum you gained during the fast. Carry your newfound passion for God throughout the year. Believe God to answer your prayers and be in faith. Don't give up!

8"Then shall your light break forth like the dawn, and your healing shall spring up speedily; your righteousness shall go before you; the glory of the Lord shall be your rear guard. 9Then you shall call, and the Lord will answer; you shall cry, and he will say, 'Here I am.' . . ."

ISAIAH 58:8,9

I THANK GOD FOR . . .

List some highlights, answered prayers, and lessons learned in 2015.
Thank God for His faithfulness, provision, and grace this year!





PREPARATION FOR THE FAST

AUDACIOUS FAITH

³³. . . who through faith conquered kingdoms, enforced justice, obtained promises, stopped the mouths of lions, ³⁴quenched the power of fire, escaped the edge of the sword, were made strong out of weakness, became mighty in war, put foreign armies to flight.

HEBREWS 11:33,34

READ

Isaiah 58:6-11 • Mark 9:23-29 • Hebrews 11

Hebrews 11 is often referred to as the “Hall of Faith”. The writer of Hebrews tells about the men and women who displayed audacious, daring, and brave faith in God. They put their hope in God, trusted Him, and believed that He would do what He had promised. We can have faith in God because He has revealed Himself in the Scriptures as a Promise-Making and Promise-Keeping God.

Audacious faith is believing God and acting on His Word—without fear or hesitation.

Faith, then, is a response to who God is and what He has promised us. It is He who makes the promise and He who fulfills it. Since He is the Almighty, all-knowing, all-powerful, and faithful God, we can trust Him and wholly put our faith in Him—just like those listed in Hebrews 11. When we have audacious faith like theirs, we not only believe God and His Word, but also act on that faith fearlessly and without hesitation.

We start the year with prayer and fasting because it helps remove unbelief in our lives. Fasting increases our faith. By seeking God and His Word, we can have greater faith in God to do what He has planned and trust Him every day. We are declaring our complete dependence and hope in our faithful God, and we are believing that He will fulfill what He has promised.

REFLECT

1. Among the heroes of the faith listed in Hebrews 11, who would you like to emulate? Why?

2. The footnote of Mark 9:29 says that prayer and fasting are needed for miracles like these. How does prayer and fasting help us encounter God and make Him known in new ways?

RESPOND

1. With audacious faith, write one specific thing you are believing to accomplish this year, by God's grace. Share this with your discipleship group so you can stand with one another and agree in prayer.

2. Faith without deeds is dead (James 2:17). To begin acting on your faith for what you just wrote, list what you can do for this faith goal to become a reality. (For example: start leading a discipleship group; apply for a new job.) Ask God for wisdom and the grace to obey as He leads you.



FAITH FOR DELIVERANCE

¹³And Moses said to the people, "Fear not, stand firm, and see the salvation of the Lord, which he will work for you today. For the Egyptians whom you see today, you shall never see again. ¹⁴The Lord will fight for you, and you have only to be silent."

EXODUS 14:13,14

READ

Psalm 34:15-19; 91:1-11 • Hebrews 11:29

Does the Lord bring His people to a moment of deliverance and breakthrough, but not follow through? Never. Moses and the Israelites had just witnessed the ten plagues in Egypt and had been granted freedom to go out into the desert to worship the Lord. But then just as the Lord had determined, He hardened Pharaoh's heart, and caused him to pursue the Israelites. Now Israel was desperately trapped between the sea and an army that wanted to annihilate them.

The Israelites needed God's salvation and deliverance. They were terrified and were changing their mind about going into the Promised Land. However, Moses' reply about God's deliverance was unwavering.

*Do not be afraid.
God is faithful to
deliver His people!*

He commanded them to be unafraid.
He assured them that God was fighting
on their behalf.

God had planned to gain glory over Pharaoh and his armies (Exodus 14:4,17,18) and to prove Himself trustworthy to Israel for all time. God, through Moses, parted the Red Sea and the people of Israel crossed over on dry ground. Pharaoh and his army attempted the chase, as the angel and the pillar of fire and cloud receded between them. Then God caused the water to flow back, drowning every person and chariot of the entire army that was pursuing them. This was to be remembered all throughout Scripture and history as one of the greatest miracles ever recorded—proof of God's faithfulness and power to deliver His people.

REFLECT

1. Based on Psalm 34:15-19, how many troubles does the Lord deliver His people from? How does He deliver?

2. In Psalm 91:1-11, what assurances does God give us for protection and deliverance?

RESPOND

1. How have you seen God's deliverance and salvation in the past year? How has He been faithful to you? How will this prepare you for the challenges you will face this year?

2. In what area of your life do you need God's deliverance? Do you trust in His willingness and ability to bring breakthrough? What do you think He is asking you to do as you wait on Him?



FAITH TO DECLARE

Since we have the same spirit of faith according to what has been written, "I believed, and so I spoke," we also believe, and so we also speak . . .

2 CORINTHIANS 4:13

READ

Psalm 92:1,2; 96:3 • Mark 11:22-24 • 2 Corinthians 4:13-18

In Mark 11, Jesus instructed His disciples to demonstrate their faith by speaking to a mountain and believing that they will receive whatever they ask in prayer. When faith is settled and formed in the heart, the mouth will speak. Faith declares what we believe in our hearts.

God set an example of faith for us when He created and declared the world into existence (Hebrews 11:3). Consequently, since we have been created in God's image, by faith, believers can frame and form circumstances by speaking God's Word. In faith, we declare God's Word over our lives. What can motivate us to speak God's Word, regardless

*Confess what
God's Word says
and declare
His truth over
your situation
every day.*

of what's happening around us? The Apostle Paul said that it was not a matter of feeling, but rather, an issue of conviction. He was certain that the God who raised Jesus from the dead will also raise us with Him and bring us into His presence.

So when we are faced with difficult circumstances, we can choose to declare God's truth, joy, and hope in our lives—not depression, disappointment, or

disillusionment. Even if our bodies are breaking down on the outside, we are being renewed every day. Our temporary and minor problems are producing an eternal supply of glory for us that is much greater than the troubles we suffer on earth.

REFLECT

1. According to these verses, what do we need to declare?

Psalm 92:2 _____

Psalm 96:3 _____

2. Reflect on Mark 11:22-24. Write some of your observations and insights on faith and prayer.

RESPOND

1. Which mountain or seemingly insurmountable challenge are you facing right now? Do you believe the promise that Jesus gave in Mark 11:22-24? How will you apply this Scripture to your situation?

2. Write down some promises from God's Word that you will confess and declare this year.



FAITH TO CONQUER

But Caleb quieted the people before Moses and said, "Let us go up at once and occupy it, for we are well able to overcome it."

NUMBERS 13:30

READ

Numbers 13:30-14:9 • Joshua 21:43-45

Romans 8:35-39 • 1 John 5:1-5

The twelve men sent to spy out the Promised Land saw the same things—a land flowing with milk and honey, and the fearsome giants who lived there. While they all agreed that the land was exceedingly rich, ten of them chose to focus on the obstacles they would have to face in order to possess the land. The other two, Joshua and Caleb, saw the same giants but they remembered God's faithfulness to His people in Egypt and in the wilderness. They believed that God could give them the Promised Land, no matter how big the giants were or how many obstacles lay ahead of them.

Joshua and Caleb walked by faith and not by sight. While unbelief sees giants and magnifies the difficulty they pose, faith sees the smallness of giants in comparison to the greatness of God.

*Faith sees
the smallness
of giants in
comparison to the
greatness of God.*

Obstacles will always stand in the way of our breakthroughs, and how we respond to them will depend on the lenses we use—we can either view life with unbelief or faith. Audacious faith allows us to see our true standing in Christ. Through Him, we are more than conquerors and this truth gives us the power to defeat giants and step into our own promised land.

REFLECT

1. In Numbers 13-14, how did the following respond to the seemingly insurmountable obstacles in the Promised Land?

Caleb and Joshua _____

The Other Spies _____

The Israelites _____

2. Based on Joshua 21:43-45, how did God fulfill His promise to His people, in spite of their unbelief and disobedience?

RESPOND

1. How do you respond when you face seemingly insurmountable obstacles? How can you start seeing your giants the way God sees them? How can you start seeing God for who He really is, and not what you may think of Him?

2. Do you believe that, in Christ, you are more than a conqueror and you have overcome the world? How will this truth change how you live?



FAITH TO CLAIM

²⁰No unbelief made him waver concerning the promise of God, but he grew strong in his faith as he gave glory to God, ²¹fully convinced that God was able to do what he had promised.

ROMANS 4:20,21

READ

Romans 4:16-22 • 2 Corinthians 1:18-20 • Hebrews 6:11-15

A promise is only as good as the person who makes the promise, and is dependent on two things: the promise-giver's ability and willingness to fulfill the promise. Abraham looked at his situation and he knew that, on his own, he would never be able to attain his deepest hope—to have a child. However, Abraham looked to God and he saw that God was both able and willing to give him a son, just as He had promised.

Similarly, there can also be two obstacles to our faith: the seemingly impossible situation and the too-good-to-be-true promise. Oftentimes, when we look at our circumstances, we only see the facts and tend to focus on our own weaknesses.

*God is willing
and able
to fulfill
His promise.*

Abraham, however, had the faith to claim the promise as he looked beyond the seemingly impossible situation to the faithful Promise-Giver. Like Abraham, we can look to God—who is able and willing to fulfill His promise. God is not just a Promise-Giver; He is also a Promise-

Keeper. That's why we can grow strong in our faith and trust that He will do what He has said.

This year, let us be audacious in our faith. We can do this because we are standing on the victory that Jesus already won for us on the cross.

REFLECT

1. How did Abraham respond to God's promise?

Romans 4:18-22 _____

Hebrews 6:13-15 _____

2. Read 2 Corinthians 1:20. How will this change the way you view seemingly impossible situations?

RESPOND

1. What is one seemingly impossible promise from God you are claiming this year?

2. How will you grow strong in your faith as you believe God for the impossible to happen?



FAITH TO SERVE

"If anyone serves me, he must follow me; and where I am, there will my servant be also. If anyone serves me, the Father will honor him."

JOHN 12:26

READ

Deuteronomy 11:12-15 • John 12:24-26

Romans 12:6-11 • Ephesians 6:5-8

In John 12, many of the Jews were going over and putting their faith in Jesus after He had raised Lazarus from the dead. The large crowd that had seen the miraculous sign was spreading the word, and more Jews were coming to see and believe in Him. This made the Pharisees and the chief priests jealous, so they made plans to kill both Jesus and Lazarus.

*Jesus became
one of us, loved
us, served us,
and sacrificed
Himself for us.*

Then Jesus began to talk about *the hour [that] has come for the Son of Man to be glorified*. He was speaking of His great sacrifice by dying on the cross—a great deed of service that requires a giving of oneself, like a grain of wheat sown in the ground and bearing much fruit. This is what Jesus did for us on the cross. He became one of us, loved us, served us, and sacrificed Himself for us.

As believers, we also have the privilege of loving and serving God. We can do so only because of God's merciful and gracious love for us. Though some may serve out of fear, for rewards, or out of obligation, as God's sons and daughters, we can serve out of love and gratitude. We serve because we want to honor God and make Him known.

REFLECT

1. Based on Ephesians 6:5-8, how should we serve God?

2. According to Deuteronomy 11:12-15, what does God promise His people when they love and serve Him?

RESPOND

1. What could be stopping you from loving and serving God? Is there an attitude or sinful habit that you need to repent of? What will you do about it?

2. How can you serve and obey God more closely this year? Write a prayer that will declare your intentions to love and serve Him.

2016 FAITH GOALS

THIS YEAR, I WILL DARE TO BELIEVE **GOD!**

FOR ME

Spiritual Revival • Physical Healing • Provision and Rich Generosity



FOR MY FAMILY

Household Salvation • Restoration of Relationships • Physical Healing



FOR MY SCHOOL/CAREER

Excellence • Promotion • Wisdom



FOR MY MINISTRY

Discipleship Group Growth • Salvation of Friends, Classmates, and Co-workers



Now faith is the assurance of things hoped for, the conviction of things not seen.

HEBREWS 11:1

MY PRAYER PARTNER, _____,
IS BELIEVING **GOD** FOR . . .

"Again I say to you, if two of you agree on earth about anything they ask, it will be done for them by my Father in heaven."

MATTHEW 18:19

SCHEDULE

DAY

1

Fasting Options

- ☐ Water only
- ☐ Liquid only
- ☐ One meal only
- ☐ Others: _____

Prayer Meeting to Attend:

DAY

2

Fasting Options

- ☐ Water only
- ☐ Liquid only
- ☐ One meal only
- ☐ Others: _____

Prayer Meeting to Attend:

DAY

3

Fasting Options

- ☐ Water only
- ☐ Liquid only
- ☐ One meal only
- ☐ Others: _____

Prayer Meeting to Attend:

DAY

4

Fasting Options

- ☐ Water only
- ☐ Liquid only
- ☐ One meal only
- ☐ Others: _____

Prayer Meeting to Attend:

DAY

5

Fasting Options

- ☐ Water only
- ☐ Liquid only
- ☐ One meal only
- ☐ Others: _____

Prayer Meeting to Attend:
