

pray **first** 
28 Days of Prayer and Fasting



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28 Days of Prayer and Fasting

Introduction

This *Pray First: Pray and Fast Devotional Guide* is an invitation to step deeper into the heart of God through prayer and the intentional spiritual practice of fasting. This resource is a shared all-church journey designed to bring unity and focus to our prayers as a church for 28 days.

Over four weeks, we will focus on four essential spheres of prayer: **our heart, our home, our church, and our city**. As we pray for God's grace to transform us from the inside out, we also join together as a community — learning to pray not only individually, but as a church family united in purpose.

Each week offers fasting suggestions, as well as an invitation to daily engage in scripture, to reflect, pray, rest, and do a spiritual practice. We offer these tools to help us grow in deeper dependence on God. Finally, the last day of the week offers an opportunity for Examen prayer, a reflective practice that helps us notice God's presence in our everyday lives.

Our hope is that by the end of our fasting and prayer journey, our hearts will be renewed, our homes strengthened, our church empowered, and our city blessed — because God hears and responds when his people pray ([2 Chronicles 7:14](#)). We would love to hear how you are experiencing God's presence as you practice the spiritual discipline of fasting and prayer over the next 28 days. **Please share your story by emailing mystory@eastlake.church.**

A Brief Guide to Fasting

Fasting heightens our hunger for the Spirit and deepens our awareness of God's presence. We fast from food so we can feast on God; starve the flesh to feed our spirit; deny our flesh to awaken our spirit; and as we recognize our physical hunger, we are reminded of our need for spiritual hunger.

Throughout scripture, God's people fasted for wisdom, breakthrough, and renewal ([Matthew 6:16](#) – 18; [Acts 13:2–3](#)).

There are many meaningful ways to fast:

- ◆ **Food Fast:** Limit meals, choose simpler foods, or drink liquids only.
- ◆ **Daniel Fast:** Plant-based eating; avoiding meat, sweets, and processed foods.
- ◆ **Digital Fast:** Reducing screen time, social media scrolling, or mindless entertainment.
- ◆ **Lifestyle Fast:** Limiting excess, negativity, or unhealthy habits.

Choose a fast appropriate for your health and season of life. The length of your fast is also up to you. However, we recommend you select a length that would allow you to sufficiently feel a strong hunger for the thing you are fasting from to be reminded of your need for spiritual hunger. **Examples:** *fast a meal a week and spend that time in prayer, fast from a form of entertainment and use that extra time in prayer, etc...*

Above all, let fasting be a way of saying, "Lord, I want you more. More than food, more than pleasures, more than anything I want you Jesus."

How to Use This Resource

We are going to begin our 28 days of prayer all together as a church on Monday, February 2nd. You may repeat this 28 days of prayer another time in the year as the Spirit leads you.

You can journey through this devotional individually, together with family, or as part of a growth group. Set aside 15–30 minutes each day. Create a quiet space, free from distraction. Ease into your time with God, quiet your mind and heart and expect him to speak to you. Slow down. Do not rush through the movements. Look forward to connecting with God.

Each day includes the following six movements:

- ◆ **Read:** Follow along with the daily readings. You can use whatever version of the bible you enjoy most. We have chosen various translations throughout this Devotional. Read slowly and attentively, expecting God to speak through his Word. Make note of the word or phrase that draws your attention.
- ◆ **Reflect:** Ask yourself, "What might God be saying to me through the passage?"
- ◆ **Pray:** Pray honestly, offering gratitude, questions, or desires to God. We have provided short prompts to help you create your own heartfelt prayers.
- ◆ **Rest:** Sit quietly in God's presence, simply being with God.
- ◆ **Spiritual Practice:** Each day you are invited to reflect on and act upon how you might live out the passage for the day.
- ◆ **Closing Prayer:** To end your prayer time, we offer a written prayer you may pray aloud or you may choose to pray as the Spirit leads.

On the seventh day, we offer an Examen, which is a prayerful practice of reflection that helps us become more aware of God's presence in our everyday lives. Rooted in Ignatian spirituality, it invites us to pause, look back over our day or week, and notice where God has been at work — through joy, struggle, silence, or surprise.

Rather than judging ourselves, we practice gratitude, honesty, and openness before God. As we reflect, we learn to discern how the Spirit is leading us forward in hope, peace, joy, love, and faithfulness.

The practice involves six moments, an adaptation of which is offered below.

- ◆ **Express Gratitude:** Recall moments — even small ones — when you sensed grace, goodness, beauty, or connection. Thank God for the gifts that came through people, tasks, rest, surprise, or delight.
- ◆ **Invite the Spirit's Awareness:** Pray for the Holy Spirit to illuminate your reflections. Ask for clarity and gentleness without self-condemnation. You are looking with God's loving eyes.
- ◆ **Reflect on Your Day:** Review the events of your day or week. Notice your reactions, desires, emotions, thoughts, and choices. Where did you feel most fully alive, at peace, and near to God? Where did you feel anxious, disconnected, resistant, or closed off? These experiences are often called consolation (movements toward God) and desolation (movements away from God). Remember that even when God feels far, God is still near — notice and name those feelings in prayer.
- ◆ **Confess and Release:** Were there moments in your day or week when you neglected love, resisted God's leading, or acted from fear or pride? Receive God's mercy, which meets us even in our shortcomings.
- ◆ **Renew Your Commitment:** Pray for the grace you need for tomorrow — new eyes to see God's presence and new courage to participate in what God is doing. Entrust yourself to God with hope.
- ◆ **Closing Prayer:** Close your time with God in however way the Spirit leads you — in praise and thanksgiving, in confession of sin or burden, or in praying for others.

As you go through your daily readings and weekly Examen, may you encounter Jesus in ways both familiar and unfamiliar, in the mundane or extraordinary. But most of all, in life-giving ways. May you be blessed through this fasting and praying journey.

WEEK 1 | *Praying for Our Heart*

Our heart is where God begins his renewing work. This week, we ask the Spirit to heal what has been wounded, soften what has grown hard, and spark fresh love for God and others. As you pray and fast, may your heart become more aligned with the heart of Jesus. Let these daily reflections open your heart to God's grace and help you listen for his gentle voice.

This week choose one of the following fasts. You may also come up with your own.

- ♦ **Fast one meal daily** – Skip a specific meal and use that window to seek God intentionally through scripture and prayer. Let your physical hunger turn your attention toward spiritual renewal.
- ♦ **Fast from sweets/snacks** – Notice cravings and turn them into prayer: “Lord, You are my true satisfaction.”
- ♦ **Fast from social media scrolling** – Replace endless scrolling with silent reflection. Invite God to renew your inner life rather than comparing it to others.
- ♦ **Fast from hurried mornings** – Wake 20 minutes early to begin the day slowly with God, nurturing a heart at peace rather than in panic.
- ♦ **Fast from negative self-talk** – When self-criticism rises, interrupt it with grace: speak truth from scripture about who God says you are.

DAY 7 | *Weekly Examen — Heart Reflection*

Today is an invitation for you to become more aware of God’s presence in your everyday life. Take a moment to prayerfully read through any of the following passages that resonated with you this week: [Ezekiel 36:26-27 \(NIV\)](#), [Psalm 139:23–24 \(NLT\)](#), [Proverbs 4:23 \(NIV\)](#), [Psalm 51:10-12 \(NLT\)](#), [Colossians 3:1–2 \(NIV\)](#), and [Hebrews 13:9 \(NIV\)](#). Reflect on the passages using the following five movements. Pause for a few moments in between movements and listen for what the Holy Spirit may be saying. You may want to journal your sense of God’s presence, any questions you might have of God, or thoughts you want to share with him. End your time with the suggested prayer, or pray as the Spirit leads you.

- ◆ **Express Gratitude:** Where did God renew or soften your heart?
- ◆ **Invite the Spirit’s Awareness:** How did God speak or nudge you this week?
- ◆ **Reflect on Your Week:** When did your heart feel most alive?
- ◆ **Confess and Release:** Offer God any burdens from the week.
- ◆ **Renew Your Commitment:** What will you carry into tomorrow?
- ◆ **Closing Prayer:** Jesus, shape my heart to love like Yours.

A Word of Encouragement: God is already transforming you from the inside out. Trust His ongoing work.

WEEK 1 | *Recap*

Celebrate every way — big or subtle — that God has renewed your heart. As we move into Week 2, expect that God’s work in you will overflow into the place closest to you: your home. God delights in the transformation that begins small and grows steadily. Continue leaning into his love.

DAY 14 | *Weekly Examen — Home Reflection*

Today is an invitation for you to become more aware of God's presence in your everyday life. Take a moment to prayerfully read through any of the following passages that resonated with you this week: [Psalm 127:1 \(CEB\)](#), [Colossians 3:14 \(NIV\)](#), [John 14:27 \(NIV\)](#), [Galatians 5:13-14 \(MEV\)](#), [Deuteronomy 6:6-9 \(NLT\)](#), and [Proverbs 18:21 \(NIV\)](#). Reflect on the passages using the following six movements. Pause for a few moments in between movements and listen for what the Holy Spirit may be saying. You may want to journal your sense of God's presence, any questions you might have of God, or thoughts you want to share with him. End your time with the suggested prayer, or pray as the Spirit leads you.

- ◆ **Express Gratitude:** What brought peace or joy to your home?
- ◆ **Invite the Spirit's Awareness:** How did God show up in ordinary moments this past week?
- ◆ **Reflect on Relationships:** Reflect back on the couple of days or this past week. When did love or unity deepen? When did thoughts, words, or actions cause harm or widen divisions?
- ◆ **Confess and Release:** Surrender tensions or hurts to God.
- ◆ **Renew Your Commitment:** How can you contribute to a healthier home this coming week?
- ◆ **Closing Prayer:** Lord, let our home be a sanctuary of your presence.

A Word of Encouragement: God is forming new rhythms of grace in your home. Keep going faithfully.

WEEK 2 | *Recap*

Small daily shifts create a powerful ripple of transformation. As you continue practicing love and peace, your home becomes a living testimony of God's presence. As we move into Week 3, we expand our circle of prayer to include our spiritual family — the Church.

DAY 21 | *Weekly Examen* — Church Reflection

Today is an invitation for you to become more aware of God’s presence in your everyday life. Take a moment to prayerfully read through any of the following passages that resonated with you this week: [1 Corinthians 12:27 \(NLT\)](#), [Acts 2:42-47 \(NIV\)](#), [Acts 4:32 \(NIV\)](#), [Ephesians 3:16-18 \(CEV\)](#), [1 Peter 4:10-11 \(NLT\)](#), and [Matthew 5:14-16 \(ESV\)](#). Reflect on the passages using the following six movements. Pause for a few moments in between movements and listen for what the Holy Spirit may be saying. You may want to journal your sense of God’s presence, any questions you might have of God, or thoughts you want to share with him. End your time with the suggested prayer, or pray as the Spirit leads you.

- ◆ **Express Gratitude:** Where did you see God working through our church this week?
- ◆ **Invite the Spirit’s Awareness:** How is God shaping unity and mission within our church?
- ◆ **Reflect on Engagement:** Where did you feel most connected to our church this week?
- ◆ **Confess and Release:** Release any frustrations or divisions.
- ◆ **Renew Your Commitment:** What is one way you can strengthen community this week?
- ◆ **Closing Prayer:** Lord, build your church through us.

A Word of Encouragement: Your prayers bless our whole church family. God is using your faithfulness in meaningful ways.

WEEK 3 | *Recap*

Thank you for lifting our church in prayer this week. God is strengthening us and shaping us into a community that shines his love. As we step into Week 4, we turn our prayers outward — seeking God’s heart for our neighborhoods and city.

DAY 28 | *Weekly Examen* — *City Reflection*

Today is an invitation for you to become more aware of God’s presence in your everyday life. Take a moment to prayerfully read through any of the following passages that resonated with you this week: [Jeremiah 29:7 \(HCSB\)](#), [Luke 19:9-10 \(NLT\)](#), [Micah 6:8 \(CEV\)](#), [Matthew 9:35-37 \(NET\)](#), and [Matthew 5:14-16 \(VOICE\)](#). Reflect on the passages using the following six movements. Pause for a few moments in between movements and listen for what the Holy Spirit may be saying. You may want to journal your sense of God’s presence, any questions you might have of God, or thoughts you want to share with him. End your time with the suggested prayer, or pray as the Spirit leads you.

- ◆ **Express Gratitude:** What in your city are you thankful for?
- ◆ **Invite the Spirit’s Awareness:** Where is God already at work around you?
- ◆ **Reflect on Compassion:** What stirred your heart this week — and why?
- ◆ **Confess and Release:** Release fear, apathy, or judgment to God.
- ◆ **Renew Your Commitment:** How can you join God’s work in your city this week?
- ◆ **Closing Prayer:** Lord, give me your heart for this city.

A Word of Encouragement: You are a light where God has placed you — and the city is better because you are here.

WEEK 4 | *Recap*

Thank you for praying for where we live, work, learn, and gather. God has heard every word. As we continue forward, ask God to use the transformation in your heart, home, and church to bring hope and blessing to the world around you.

A Final Word

You have completed this 28-day journey of prayer and fasting — and that is a gift worth giving thanks for. Over the past month, we have paused together to seek God for our hearts, our homes, our church, and our city. What began as a guide can now become a way of life — a simple invitation to keep turning toward God in every season.

As you continue to grow in love of and faith in Jesus, may prayer remain your first response, scripture your steady anchor, and the Holy Spirit your daily guide. May the practices you have begun continue to shape how you live, love, and serve. And may the peace of Christ go with you — into your relationships, your word, your neighborhoods, and your world.

Go with hope and with gratitude. Above all, keep praying first.