



21 Days of Prayer and Fasting

A Daily Devotional

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INTRODUCTION

21 Days of Prayer & Fasting

The goal of fasting is to draw nearer to God. Biblical fasting always has to do with eliminating distractions for a spiritual purpose; it hits the reset button of our soul and renews us from the inside out. It also enables us to celebrate the goodness and mercy of God and prepares our hearts for all the good things God desires to bring into our lives. Remember, your personal fast should present a level of challenge, but it is very important to know your body, your options, and, most importantly, to seek God in prayer and follow what the Holy Spirit leads you to do.

From January 8th to January 28th, all of City Hill Church will be joining together for 21 Days of Prayer & Fasting. Partner with us during this powerful time as we draw nearer to God and pursue what matters most to Him in 2018.

As we go through this journey, we've prepared this daily devotional to help you focus your thoughts and prayers. I hope the devotionals written here will inspire you to draw near to God and seek His best for your life. As you read, I am sure you will hear Dan's humor and his heart for God. May his Spirit-filled words inspire and encourage you.

JC

DAY 1

What are you believing God for? I know sometimes in order to avoid disappointment and let downs, we stop expecting. If you don't expect things to change then you can't get hurt when they don't. I believe this leads to more than disappointment. It causes our faith to become dull, hardens our hearts, shows a lack of trust in our heavenly Father and causes us to miss out on what God is waiting for us to ask for. Jesus said you have not because you ask not.

So I challenge you on this first day of fasting to write down a list of things that only God can change. Maybe even things you gave up asking God for. Believe that your heavenly Father will show up in some way. May this fast renew our faith and trust in our Heavenly Daddy and align our hearts with His.

Read James 4:1-3

DAY 2

I was texting a friend about her son who is battling drug addiction. She was doing everything she could to help but after so many years of let downs and heartache, she said she was having a hard time believing anything could change. She basically said she has giving up all hope that her son could stay clean.

It made me think of the story in Mark 9:17-29. A father brings his son to Jesus who is a mute and has a demon that literally tries to kill him. Jesus asks how long the boy has been like this and the father says since childhood. There had to be some really hard times for that dad seeing his son like that. What changed for that dad that day that would make him step out from the crowd? The answer, Jesus showed up and immediately he recognized that it was possible. ***Faith arises when Jesus shows up, chains are broken and lives are changed.***

I am confident that Jesus will show up through the presence of the Holy Spirit during your fast. My word for you is when He shows up in your prayer time, or in your reading time, or during your worship time, or through the encouragement of a friend or however He shows up...be obedient to His voice. Soak in His presence, allow Him to be God and do whatever He asks of you.

Read Mark 9:17-29 NKJV

1. List 3 spiritual principles that you see in the story?

2. What role did prayer and fasting play in this story?

DAY 3

Fasting stinks sometimes! Probably not the word you were looking for this morning but it's true. Most times I am fasting there are at least five tough moments a day I want to eat something that I can't. Maybe ten times for some of you. My wife gets caffeine withdrawal headaches from not having coffee and falls asleep twice at work. Don't worry her students are older so they can watch themselves. Then I hit emotional walls with the family, where I have a negative, impatient, and poor attitude. I'm sure it is felt by everyone even if I don't say anything or lash out. Why does this all happen? **Because I didn't give my body what it wanted**, what it is used to, what it craves, what it almost subconsciously reaches for when tired, cranky, bored or upset...sugar, chocolate, caffeine a Bahama Mama from tropical smoothie, or a late-night snack.

Fasting has a way of reminding me how often I give my body and ultimately my mind what it wants, often at the exact moment it wants it. The Apostle Paul says in Romans 7:15, *"the things that I don't want to do I do and the things I want to do I don't do."* Then in another chapter, 1 Corinthians 9:27 (NKJV), he says, *"But I discipline my body and bring it into subjection, lest, when I have preached to others, I myself should become disqualified."* The NIV version says it this way: *"No, I strike a blow to my body and make it my slave so that after I have preached to others, I myself will not be disqualified for the prize"*.

I guess my point is that it is ok to be uncomfortable, to feel some pain, to sense the weakness of this flesh we live in. Maybe that's the point, to remember that we must rely on the presence and power of the Holy Spirit that often comes when we make ourselves uncomfortable so that we can look to Him for true comfort.

Read 1 Corinthians 9

1. Anyways you may be using food as comfort?
2. Ask the Holy Spirit to reveal areas of your life where you may not be disciplined?
3. Ask Him for help and wisdom to change.

DAY 4

I included a link to one of my favorite kid's movie clips and of course it's about food. It's the 'Over the Hedge - Food Worship' video.

No, stop reading and watch the video: <https://youtu.be/WBlceqcWIEY>

When Jesus fasted for 40 days He ate no food and some even think He drank no water. Whether He drank water or not can you imagine not eating for 40 days and then someone as cunning as the devil offering you food? It would be like day 3 of your fast and go to your mom's house and she just happened to make fried chicken for the first time ever. So how did Jesus overcome? He not only knew the word, had the word in Him, but He used the Word of God when He needed help. This was His response:

Jesus answered, "It is written: 'Man shall not live by bread alone, but on every word that comes from the mouth of God' Matthew 4:4 NIV.

Don't underestimate the power of the Word of God to help you overcome temptation, loneliness, pride, or discouragement.

1. Spend some time today thinking about a scripture or two you can use in your times of need.
2. Write it down and keep it in your pocket or background on your phone.
3. Use it!

DAY 5

"There is a battle behind the battle." That's how the presenter put it during a seminar I attended a while back, called "Ancient Paths." It was a reminder that we all too often forget what Paul says in Ephesians 6:12 NKJV:

"For we do not wrestle against flesh and blood, but against principalities, against powers, against the rulers of the darkness of this age, against spiritual hosts of wickedness in the heavenly places."

The devil hates you and me, your family and my family, your kids and my kids, your marriage, and my marriage and your destiny in Christ and my destiny in Christ. He hates us with a demonic hatred. We cannot really understand until we stand at the edge of our shattered life and realize he's standing over us smiling in satisfaction. He's smiling when he sees abuse, smiling when husbands and wives won't forgive each other. He's smiling when young people turn their minds, imagination, time and hearts over to their phones. These examples remind me of another part of that same chapter where Paul says, "Lest Satan should take advantage of us; for we are not ignorant of his devices" 2 Corinthians 2:11 NKJV. Other versions use the word, schemes instead of devices. Do you know someone who is always scheming? Satan is the ultimate schemer and every one of his schemes are set to rob, kill and destroy God's people.

When Daniel fasted and prayed, the spiritual battle was broken. (Daniel 10:12) When YOU fast and pray, the spiritual battle is broken. We become free to really experience the victory God has for us in areas we didn't even know we needed.

1. Think of a situation you are dealing with in your life and ask God to break the hold of the enemy behind the scenes. Ask the Holy Spirit to reveal the root of the issue.
2. Act on anything the Spirit prompts you to do.

DAY 6

I want the most out of this fast and I'm sure you do too. Friday is date night for my wife and I, and I miss sitting with her and eating. (Didn't that sound so sweet? I can almost hear the "aww's" from here.) The reality is I can still sit with her, hold her hand, laugh with her, talk about things. What I'm really upset about is not going to Carabas and..... (I GOING TO BE MERCIFUL WITH YOU! I was going to describe a delicious Italian dish there but I don't want to make anyone stumble.)

But I realized that the food is like a warm blanket on a cold night. For me, after a long week of being dad, husband and working, eating is my reward. This may not be a bad thing at all. But what can be dangerous is using food, social media, lashing out, passive aggressiveness, porn, shopping, or any number of other thoughts and actions, to medicate pain, disappointment, loneliness, and fear.

Jesus said, "Come to Me, all you 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" Matthew 11:28-30 NKJK.

Our hearts are like a leaky vault. When we feel discomfort we either expose it or we push it down into that vault, thinking it is safe locked up down there. But it's not, it leaks out. Unprocessed, unconfessed, unhealed pain from our past will always leak back to the surface. The Spirit wants us to expose it, to draw it out like the poison of a rattlesnake bite would be drawn. Bring it into the open where it can be ministered to. Where we can find rest for our souls.

1. Spend some quiet time with the Lord and ask Him where you need healing, where is your soul not at rest? (God not only exposes our pain, He will walk us through the process of healing it.)
2. Tell Jesus you want help and will do it His way when He directs you.

DAY 7

And Mary said: "My soul magnifies the Lord, and my spirit has rejoiced in God my Savior" Luke 1:46-47 NKJV.

I love Mary's response after she was told by the angel that she was chosen by God to carry Jesus. You may be thinking, "I'd praise the Lord too if I was just visited by an angel and told I was going to be used by God to carry the savior of the world." I could try to be clever and show you a bunch of verses that show you that you have been visited by God and that God's Spirit does live inside of you. But it would distract me of the point this morning. My real message is a life-changing principle I learned as a teenager. Here it is, are you ready?

GOD DESERVES MY PRAISE NO MATTER HOW I FEEL.

David said, "I will bless the Lord at all times; His praise shall continually be in my mouth. My soul shall make its boast in the Lord; The humble shall hear of it and be glad. Oh, magnify the Lord with me, and let us exalt His name together" Psalms 34:1-3 NKJV.

When? No matter how my week was...no matter if I think I did good or bad this week if I successfully fasted or broke my fast. He deserves my/our praise. Did you notice the last line of Psalm 34:1-3? "Let us exalt His name together." I'm looking forward to service this morning, it is our chance this week to magnify the Lord...together.

1. When should we magnify the Lord?
2. What is the soul?
3. What happens when we take the time to worship?

DAY 8

Art Williams is a billionaire. A Christian businessman who started out in life as a high school football coach. He said something that has stayed with me since the first time I heard it. He said, "the minor adjustments it takes to win are so basic and simple they seem ridiculous, that's why most people don't adjust and why most people don't win."

Although he was referring to business, I've seen this work in my classroom. Move one student and everything settles down. Get up 5 minutes earlier and now I'm on time for work. Set up money to be moved into a separate account automatically each check and now I have a growing emergency fund. I bet this idea of minor adjustments works in our Christian lives too.

As we start week two of our fast, are there any minor adjustments you need to make? Here are a few suggestions:

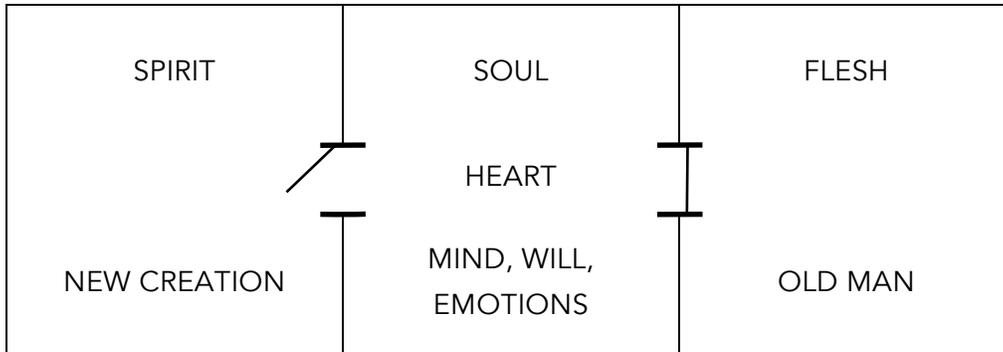
1. If you are doing a partial fast maybe fast an extra meal, item or hour a day.
2. Add a Bible reading plan from the You Version Bible app to your daily routine.
3. Confess a secret sin to a trusted brother or sister in Christ today.
4. Set a specific prayer time aside each day.
5. Ask "THAT" person for forgiveness. (You know who.)
6. Instead of music, listen to a sermon podcast.
7. Ask the Wonderful-Counselor, God a question and wait for His answer.
8. Think about your ways in light of this verse:

"Trust in the Lord with all your heart, and lean not on your own understanding; in all your ways acknowledge Him, And He shall direct your paths" Proverbs 3:5-6 NKJV.

Write down what you will adjust in the space below:

DAY 9

Take a look at this diagram for a minute. What are your thoughts?



If you don't realize it, there is a door between the room, representing God's Spirit in us, to our souls. And a door from the flesh part of us, to our hearts. Both of these parts of us want to flood the room of our souls, influence our hearts, thoughts, attitudes, actions, desires and emotions. The Bible says,

"The sinful nature wants to do evil, which is just the opposite of what the Spirit wants. And the Spirit gives us desires that are the opposite of what the sinful nature desires. These two forces are constantly fighting each other..." Galatians 5:17 NLT.

When one door is open the other door is shut. We all know what happens to our souls when we listen to the flesh. But look what happens when we open the door to The Spirit?

"But the Holy Spirit produces this kind of fruit in our lives: love, joy, peace, patience, kindness, goodness, faithfulness, gentleness, and self-control... Galatians 5:22-23 NLT.

Fasting not only helps shut the door to the flesh, but bursts open the door to our spirits which are born again, made alive by God's Spirit. Keep pressing in brothers and sisters. Keep that door open. Let Him flood your souls today. I say, let the Holy Spirit guide your lives. Then you won't be doing what your sinful nature craves.

1. Read and meditate on this powerful verse. (Galatians 5:17-23)
2. Is there anything the Holy Spirit has been pressing you to do that you still haven't done? (Why haven't you done it? What are you afraid of?)

DAY 10

My dad is a retired Suffolk Police Officer. One of my favorite stories he tells is of a call one night to a house party. He goes in to tell them they have to shut it down and he finds himself surrounded by a group of people. A few of them start mouthing off and he looks around for the biggest mouth in the group and walks right up to him and arrests him. After that, all the little mouths shut up and backed off. My dad knew the "strong man" principle. Jesus says in Matthew 12:29, *"how can one enter a strong man's house and plunder his goods unless he first binds the strong man? And then he will plunder his house."* For all the City Hill-fact-checkers I know this verse is about casting out demons and the strong man here is the demonic leader.

But have you ever considered that you are the strong man over your house? That if Satan can get to you then how much easier it will be for him to get your spouse, your kids, your dreams, the ministry you lead and on and on. I know this principle to be true because of the wreckage my sin has caused my family at times. Friends, there is too much at stake for us to be bound by sin. This is the year of freedom for anyone who wants it. For anyone willing to live **IN** Christ and not just **FOR** Christ.

Read Matthew 12:25-29

1. What areas of your life do you feel bound up?
2. Who are you the strong man or woman for? (Who depends on you?)
3. Spend some time of prayer talking to the Father about these areas of your life.

DAY 11

Yesterday around 12 PM we hit the halfway point of our fast. That means as you read this you are closer to the end than you are to the beginning. That's an interesting thought, to be closer to the end of something than the beginning. I know we call Wednesday hump day but for me, Thursdays give me that "ah" pause, "almost there" feeling. I wonder if not knowing the end date makes life harder in some ways. For example, if you're going through a tough season with your spouse it may seem endless. Or if you are having trouble deciding your career and you feel the answer will never come? What if you knew the end of that trial was a year, 6 months, a month or an hour away?

I wish I could tell you the date your son would be set free, or your daughter would find healing, your financial situation would turn around, the house would sell, the man of your dreams would arrive, but sorry I can't. I believe this fast has reminded me is this: That when we set it in our hearts to know Jesus and to allow the Spirit to build in our souls, the issues of life seem less fatal, and less overwhelming. I've found that my flesh is a liar. It tells me the situation is impossible, "it will never change, or God doesn't hear you."

My flesh has temporary "Band-Aids" for life's problems. When applied, they still need constant re-applications and even more healing as the flesh's solutions lead to more problems. But God's mercy, love, grace, and friendship is like a warm, healing salve that runs from the top of my head down over my face and soaks into my thoughts and emotions. I feel like I could write on and on but I'll leave you with these verses:

Read Proverbs 18:24 NKJV, and Isaiah 28:12 NKJV

1. How has Jesus been a friend to you?
2. When you think about a great friend, is there anything lacking in your friendship with Jesus right now?
3. Have you felt the rest that is available in Christ?
4. Listen to this song called 'There is a Cloud' by Elevation Worship.

DAY 12

So, this was the first day I honestly didn't know what to write. Not that I have heard some booming voice from heaven for the first 11 days, but I more or less had ideas and inspiration. When I said the same prayer last night and went through the same preparation, I didn't get the same result. I probably prayed, read and studied more last night than any of the other days. Why didn't I get the same result? I don't know. Maybe God wants to teach me any number of lessons, I'm sure you could think of a few. Or maybe I missed something He said to me and that's what happened. Possibly I sinned too much yesterday and this is His punishment. You ever think that about yourself? Or maybe He's waiting until the last minute to give me some deep revelation and a great testimony will come out of this. I don't know.

Go ahead pick one of those scenarios or make up another one but consider this verse:

"For as the heavens are higher than the earth, so are My ways higher than your ways, and My thoughts than your thoughts" Isaiah 55:9 NKJV.

I'm going to pick a lesson that works for me and my life and my personality. Here's my lesson: **do it anyway!** I made a commitment to JC to have 21 devotions for the fast then I am going to have 21 devotions for the fast. Not 20 because on day 12 I didn't feel like God directed me like I thought He should. Not 20 because I was tired one day or I didn't feel like it. There are any number of excuses why we don't keep our commitments to others and maybe more importantly to ourselves. While I know there is no condemnations to those who are in Christ Jesus, the Holy Spirit still pokes us to help us make course corrections.

So, I'm poking you today. In love, of course. We are not like everyone else. Jesus said in Matt. 5:37: *"All you need to say is 'Yes' or 'No'; anything beyond this comes from the evil one."*

1. Have you made any commitments that you have not kept during this fast? Are you prone to slacking on your commitments when you don't feel like doing something?
2. Are there any spiritual lessons you have learned from fasting that can help you better keep your commitments?
3. What changes would you see in your life if you began using the strength God has given you today to do some of the things you have always wanted to do?

DAY 13

"Therefore I exhort first of all that supplications, prayers, intercessions, and giving of thanks be made for all men, for kings and all who are in authority, that we may lead a quiet and peaceable life in all godliness and reverence" 1 Timothy 2:1-2

I figured I'd better start with the verse on this one and I think you already know where I'm going with today's devotional. Yep...President Trump. The Bible clearly is instructing Christians in the first three parts of this verse to intensely pray for all men, for our politicians, and all those in leadership positions. He knows just how important it is for us to have peace and a quiet life. Paul says to use "supplications, prayers, and intercessions;" He is trying to stress the need to earnestly pray for our leaders. (By the way, do you know how I got a better understanding of the word supplications? I googled it. You can do the same.)

I want to do a better job of being obedient to God's Word during this presidential term than I did for the last one. Have you posted more comments or prayers for Trump? I'm guilty of having a lot of opinions but very few prayers. I'm sorry Father for not being obedient to your Word and I want to change that. We have about 7 more days of fasting and I'm asking you to put our President on your prayer list. Check this verse out: *"The king's heart is in the hand of the Lord, like the rivers of water; He turns it wherever He wishes"* Proverbs 21:1 NKJV.

Through prayer we have the power to influence a President who has the power to influence a nation. But how do you pray for leaders who you may not like? When your heart is angry, hurt, offended or suspicious? Did you notice the 4th thing said to do? Yep, He went there...*"giving of thanks be made for all men."* You can't be obedient to God's Word without thanking God for him. I love the Bible, it knows how to test our hearts. Here's something you can be thankful for, tens of millions of people heard Trump quote Psalm 133:1, *"How good and pleasant it is when God's people live together in unity!"*

I was watching the inauguration with a room of 10th graders. I was thankful for that moment if not for anything else. Let's be obedient to the Word and pray for our leaders. Only God knows what our prayers will truly do. Spend a few minutes applying that verse and pray for our President. (For things like wisdom, his prayer life, protection for him and his family, divine moments, his leadership, humility and his health.) Give thanks for him because the Bible says to and because it will test your heart. Add him and other leaders to your prayer list.

DAY 14

There is never a convenient time to fast. -Jentezen Franklin

I definitely think that quote from Pastor Franklin is true. There is always an excuse why not to fast. A birthday party, an office party, happy hour with the crew, a family get together or we just don't feel like it. I don't know about you but there is a part of me that is getting tired of this fast. The strange thing is I am less hungry than when I am not fasting. Most of the time I just want certain things. I want some chocolate, (sorry Mervin.) I want ice cream; I want something sweet after a delicious meal. I want 50 other things to eat. You notice the key word in those last few lines? "I". Like a spoiled child, my flesh wants what it can't have. It's a daily reminder that nothing good dwells in my flesh.

There is never a convenient time to fast. So maybe you had good intentions to fast and never started. Maybe you slipped up along the way and just gave up. Or maybe someone just messed up your day and forwarded you this email and now you feel guilty about re-committing to the fast. Romans says, *"There is therefore now no condemnation to those who are in Christ Jesus, who do not walk according to the flesh, but according to the Spirit"* Romans 8:1 NKJV.

Jen had once reminded me how we can do 99 things right and miss it once and all we remember is the one thing we fell short with. (Hey, if you slipped a piece a chocolate, Mervin, when no one was looking, forgive yourself, God loves you and sees your heart.) Keep moving forward! Let's do what Paul says and run this race with perseverance. Let's finish strong. Get started today, try again today, pray for help today, open the door to the Spirit a little wider today. Pray with your spouse today. Encourage a friend today. Put that chocolate down today. As I write this I just know God is still not done with us.

1. Have you been condemning yourself in any ways during this fast? If so, is what you believe, what God believes about you?
2. What action can you take today to open the door to the Spirit?

DAY 15

This is the last week of the fast, 7 more days, 168 more hours, and 10,080 minutes. (I was going to do seconds but the numbers were starting to depress me.) My wife, Jen reminded me of an important fasting principle "you don't always see the answer to what you've been praying for during the 21 days of the fast." I really hope you have seen God move in some tangible way. During a fast I was on, I had a great experience early on that was definitely a divine visit from a friend who pointed her finger at me and basically said, "you need to go to this seminar." So, I went the next day and it was literally life changing. Like a *my-life-will-never-be-the-same* type of thing.

But maybe you're fasting and praying and the only thing you feel is more disciplined, closer to God, a greater commitment to prayer, freshness in your Bible reading or more peace. Do you see what I did there? If you're experiencing that, you've won already. Your heart is cleaner like David prayed in Psalm 51:10,12. *"Create in me a clean heart, O God, and renew a steadfast spirit within me... Restore to me the joy of Your salvation, and uphold me by Your generous Spirit."*

Your relationship with Christ and fellowship with the Spirit is stronger and brighter than it was 15 days ago. That's reason to praise Him and be filled with joy right now. Isn't our God so faithful, patient, kind, loving and merciful? BUT WAIT...THERE'S MORE!

I told you about how God met me during a fast, but in 2015, God waited until May to show up after that January's fast, in a supernatural way. He showed up and revealed things to my wife and began a process of bringing freedom in my life that I had wanted for 20 years. So, don't let the flesh fool you into doubting God. God is not a man that He should lie and His Word never returns void. Stay the course my friends and press in today. God sees! Daniel got his answer on the 21st day. (Daniel Ch.10:23) Your answer is coming.

But as it is written: "Eye has not seen, nor ear heard, nor have entered into the heart of man the things which God has prepared for those who love Him" 1 Corinthians 2:9 NKJV

1. Take a few seconds or minutes to thank God for what He has already done in your life during this fast. Now take another few seconds or minutes to thank God for what He is going to do in your life this year.

DAY 16

If not for a fast I wouldn't be writing this right now. I wouldn't know any of you. I'm not sure exactly what my life would look like today. All I know is that Jen watched a message by Jentezen Franklin about fasting and decided to fast for a family member who pretty much had lost her mind. At worst, she should be in a mental hospital or at the least should be heavily medicated. But that year God rescued the both of us. This family member of ours, her mind was snatched back from the torment it was under and she is supernaturally living free of medication from mental illness. And there's me, living a secret life of lies and sin. Battling habits that had been ingrained in me since a teenager. Never really believing it would ever change. Only hoping to live in my sin and never be exposed, never hurt those I loved. Well, the year of that fast, every secret thing came out and it was the turning point of my life. The Dan Kelly you all know today is the best version of myself anyone has ever known. Why, because God cares, God loves and God rescues. "He is the perpetual wave against the rock and He's relentless in His pursuit of my heart." -Heart of Man

I owe my wife so much for her obedience to fast. She did it alone that year out of desperation for her family member, but, *"Now to Him who is able to do exceedingly abundantly above all that we ask or think, according to the power that works in us,"* Ephesians 3:20 NKJV.

He did more, He was greater, He went overboard, He went further, He won the day, won the year and won two lives back from the pit. You can't tell me God doesn't honor the chosen fast. Look at what He promises to do:

"Is this not the fast that I have chosen: To loose the bonds of wickedness, to undo the heavy burdens, to let the oppressed go free, and that you break every yoke?" Isaiah 58:6

There's a Dan Kelly in your life who is stuck under the power of sin and deception. There's a family member out there who won't make it through this year without your fast. Press in today, it's not over.

1. Dedicate the rest of this fast for someone in your life you know needs a breakthrough. Pray for them when those hunger pains come or you feel the flesh telling you to give up.
2. Thank God for the things He will do above and beyond what you ask and pray for.

DAY 17

Has it happened to you yet? Has the enemy, life, the flesh hit you in your blindside? In football, the quarterback can't see what's coming behind him when he drops back to make a pass. He's surveying the field looking for someone to pass the ball to and watching what is in front of him. But he has to trust his guys are watching his back and protecting him from getting hit on his blindside. I've watched games where quarterbacks have had their knees blown out, legs literally snapped, and been knocked unconscious from getting hit from behind. All because they weren't aware of what was coming.

I want to take day 17 to remind you that the enemy is coming. There is no way he's happy with our fast, with the open doors City Hill has been experiencing, your renewed focus on things above and less on things of the earth.

"...so that Satan will not outsmart us. For we are familiar with his evil schemes"
2 Corinthians 2:11 NLT.

While our prayers can stop many of his attacks, life will happen on this is earth, not heaven. One of my favorite thoughts is this: "You can't always control what happens around you, but you can always control what happens in you." Guard your heart against fear, anger, jealousy, lust, impatience, lying, gossip, stealing, faithlessness or backbiting. We are tested in these areas probably every day. But be encouraged the Bible says,

"The temptations in your life are no different from what others experience. And God is faithful. He will not allow the temptation to be more than you can stand. When you are tempted, He will show you a way out so that you can endure" 1 Corinthians 10:13 NLT.

My favorite part of that verse is the line...**AND GOD IS FAITHFUL.**

1. How have you been reacting to life's everyday hits? Do you feel like you have been blindsided this week?
2. What part of 1 Corinthians 10:13 encourages you the most?

DAY 18

"To everything, there is a season, a time for every purpose under heaven"
Ecclesiastes 3:1 NKJV.

I heard a preacher put it like this: "You're either just coming out of a storm, in a storm right now or heading into a new storm." Les Brown says, "in the good times we put it in our pockets but in the lean times we put it in our hearts." If you find yourself in a tough season, which could be a day, week, month or year, make the most out of it by making sure you have a guide with you on the journey. A guide who can help lead the way, a guide who can stop at times, kneel next to you and point out the lessons, and the markers. A guide who can encourage you when the road gets tough. Jesus is our guide. He's walked where you are walking right now and wants to use our seasons of life as maps to guide us to a deeper trust, reliance, and faith in Him.

If you need support from a brother or sister in Christ, then reach out. But remember what the Psalmist said, "*my help comes from the Lord, the maker of heaven and earth*" Psalm 121:2.

May the God of all peace make His love, grace, and power evident to you all in this season of life. Right now I'm lifting my hands and soul in surrender once again to the Lord, saying "Lord I need you, I can't and won't do it without you.

"Don't let the season you're in, season every other area of your life. Or maybe you should?" -Dan Kelly

1. What season are you in right now? What lessons have you learned in various seasons of your life?
2. What would you pray for, for someone else, who is going through a tough season similar to yours? Pray that prayer for them.

Day 19

"He said to his disciples, "The harvest is great, but the workers are few. So pray to the Lord who is in charge of the harvest; ask him to send more workers into his fields" Matthew 9:37-38 NLT.

"For no one can come to me unless the Father who sent me draws them to me, and at the last day I will raise them up" John 6:44 NLT.

While you have been praying for someone else guess what? Someone has been praying for you. Some wife has been praying for her husband who is unexplainably distant from her and the family. A dad has been praying for his daughter who doesn't have time for church anymore since she went to college. There's a teenager praying for her friend who is suicidal. A pastor who has been praying for his church to catch a vision for the lost around them. You and I are the answer to their prayers. We are very often the voice of God's plea to the lost around us, we are the laborers God has chosen to bring in the lost.

During this fast, I have seen opportunities at work to share what God has been doing through this fast. Doors have been opened that I pray will continue to stay open. During this fast, life-long dreams have come my way. Keep your eyes and heart ready. Let the word of God dwell in you richly. Be so full of the Spirit that you can't help but spill over onto people around you. It's not just life or death; it's eternity. That's a long time.

1. Make a top 5 list of people you want to pray for and invite into your life and to church.
2. Who has God already brought into your life that you may be overlooking?

DAY 20

"Two people are better off than one, for they can help each other succeed. If one person falls, the other can reach out and help. But someone who falls alone is in real trouble"
Ecclesiastes 4:9-10 NLT.

This fast has been proof of that for me. If not for my wife I would have broken my fast, given in to my flesh for no real reason and probably would have had some regrets. But when it comes to fasting she is the Daniel fast hard-liner. I mean she wouldn't eat something that was baked in sunflower oil because it isn't considered 'high-quality oil.' I was like the snake in the garden whispering in her ear. I wonder did you have another person on your team for this fast? Someone, to encourage you, hold you accountable, someone to remind you of your commitment? Ecclesiastes goes on to say:

"But someone who falls alone is in real trouble. A person standing alone can be attacked and defeated, but two can stand back-to-back and conquer. Three are even better, for a triple-braided cord is not easily broken" Ecclesiastes 4:9-10, 12 NLT.

Do you know what is better than 2? Yep, 3. We weren't meant to go at it alone. I believe isolation is a sign that something is wrong in a believer's life. That it is a method used by our flesh to hide our sin or pain from others. Walking alone is walking into the dark. Healing and strength come from walking together.

What I love most about City Hill are all the opportunities to walk with other Christ followers. Thank God, it's not a perfect church because I would have messed it up when I started coming and so would have you. I have found genuine relationships through life groups, group chats, serve teams, men's retreats, couples like Richie and Priscilla and others who reached out, prayers from someone sitting behind me on a Sunday morning during service and so many other opportunities. I truly believe you have to go out of your way at City Hill to not get connected. Make a decision right now as you read this to get connected.

1. If you are not connected, ask yourself the tough question, why not? (Read John 3:21-21. I secret sin is keeping you from connecting then confess it and ask for forgiveness.)
2. Ask the "Wonderful-Counselor" Jesus, who is someone you can begin to connect with? (Make this the year of connection and confession.)

DAY 21

This is it! The final day. Congratulations on doing one of the hardest things to do. You kept your commitment to God for 21 days. Isn't it crazy how time marches on? Day 21 seemed so far away only a week ago. Almost bitterly far away at times yet it's here. We just celebrated the new year yet February is only a few days away. We had made a commitment to Jesus to fast for 21 days, for 3 weeks. Now we have 337 days, 48 more weeks to eat whatever we want. Sometimes I think Jesus gives us too much freedom with our time. I know there is a part of me that is hungrier for Jesus than it is for a bacon, egg and cheese breakfast sandwich tomorrow morning at 8 am. There's a part of me that is still hungry to communicate with the Holy Spirit the way two friends sit around a table and laugh together and cry together and search out the answers to life's mysteries. There's a part of me that isn't satisfied Spiritually. There are still things that need to change in me and in those around me. There are victories that need to be won and ground that has been taken that still needs to be held from Satan.

"Teach us oh God to number our days, give us a heart of wisdom" Psalm 90:12.

I'm convinced that we have the chance once again to accept Christ's offer to take up our crosses and follow Him. To keep knocking on the door to a deeper relationship with Jesus.

"Behold, I stand at the door and knock. If anyone hears My voice and opens the door, I will come into him and dine with him, and he with Me. To him who overcomes I will grant to sit with Me on My throne, as I also overcame and sat down with My Father on His throne" Revelation 3:20-21 NKJV.

Keep the door open to your spirit. Let your reborn spirit, which is able to connect with God's Spirit, flood your heart, mind, emotions and will.

1. List 3-5 spiritual lessons you have learned through this fast?
2. What have you learned about the way your flesh operates through this fast?
3. Fasting should be a lifestyle for believers. Prayerfully consider how you will make fasting a continued part of your spiritual discipline.

