

Prayer Guide

ABC Fall Focus Week 2020

Dear ABC family,

As we've walked through the past number of months, I've been reminded about how the press of the world on our lives is ongoing. In seasons like we've been experiencing, the reality of that becomes all the more intense and all the more clear.

Because of that, it's important for us to have seasons in our lives where we bring everything back to what it's all about... where we regain a proper focus. That is what Fall Focus Week is all about; Bringing our hearts and focus back to Jesus. As we enter into the fall season, including this new ministry season at ABC, we want to do so offering ourselves afresh to the Lord, asking Him to reveal His will for us as we step forward.

In order to do this, we will engage in four important spiritual practices over the next week: Repentance, fasting, prayer, and worship.

The word **repentance** comes from a military term that means to do an about-face... to turn around and change course; to go from the wrong path to the right. First, we change our minds about the direction we are going to go, then with sorrowful heart for our sin we ask God's forgiveness, and then we change our lifestyles. That is repentance. We will give you an opportunity to repent before God, trusting His forgiveness is for you through Jesus Christ.

Fasting is giving up food or something else valuable or important for a period of time in order for our heart and focus to be more devoted to God. Biblical fasting is to seek God. Fasting also reveals the fervency of our prayers before the Lord. We are willing to give up the distractions or pleasures of whatever we are fasting to fervently pray and focus on the Lord.

Prayer is talking to God. He loves when we come to Him in prayer. When we speak to God, we adore Him as Lord, we confess our sin, we give Him thanks, and we present our requests to Him. We don't need to come with special prayers or formulas. We only need to come to Him knowing He is a loving Father who longs to speak with his child.

Worship will be an important part of our week. We will worship the Lord together in song on the 9th and the 16th at ABC, but we will also worship Him in our hearts throughout the week. Strive to enter each day with a worshipful heart to the Lord, and see what joy He brings into your spirit as you do so day by day.

I encourage you to purposely set aside time each day between the 10th and the 16th to meet with God utilizing this prayer guide. Thanks to Kris Stocker for her many important contributions to this guide. Note that there are simple prayer focuses and directions for each

day. Before you begin, ask the Lord what He would have you give up as a fast to Him for the week- a meal per day, an activity like watching TV, or social media, or something else. Whatever it is, use it as time to break from distraction and focus especially on the Lord through this prayer guide during these seven days.

Before entering this special week, I encourage you to read Nehemiah chapters 9 and 10. These chapters offer a powerful example and format for fasting and prayer:

- 1) The people assembled to fast, confess their sins, and worship the Lord
- 2) They gave praises to God for who He is and what He had done
- 3) They acknowledged their sin
- 4) God forgave them and did not forsake them, and
- 5) They renewed their covenant with God.

May we see their actions as an example for us as we enter this week, and may we take this week just as seriously.

I join with you as we renew our hearts and focus on the Lord together,

Pastor Jon

**Join with the ABC Family on Wednesday evening, September 9th at
6:30 PM to begin this special week with a time of collective
repentance, prayer, and worship!**

Daily Prayer Guide:

September 10 (Day 1)

Personal Repentance – When we repent, we are agreeing with God about our sinful condition, and we’re seeking God’s forgiveness and power to walk a new path. We know from Psalm 51:17 that the sacrifice God desires is a broken and repentant heart. Repentance is a turning from our sin and a “re-turning” to God.

Ask God to reveal your sin. When He does, confess it to Him, turn from it setting a new course, receive His forgiveness, and ask for His power to give you daily victory moving forward. (See the scriptures on God’s forgiveness below). Let the prayer of Psalm 139:23-24 guide you as you enter into repentance. *Search me, O God, and know my heart; test me and know my thoughts. Point out anything in me that offends You, and lead me along the path of everlasting life.*

Read the Ten Commandments in Exodus 20:1-17.

Ask yourself:

In what ways have I put other gods before the Lord?

In what ways have I created idols?

How have I used God's name in vain? Malachi 1:6-8, 3:13-14

How have I not kept the Sabbath?

How have I not honored my mother and father?

How have I committed murder or adultery (Matthew 5:21-22, 27-28)

How have I stolen? (Malachi 3:8)

In what ways have I born false witness against my neighbor?

In what ways have I coveted my neighbor's possessions?

As each sin comes to mind, ask God for forgiveness and empowerment to live differently.

Next, Read Isaiah 58. Allow the Lord to speak to you through this passage. What is he telling you in relationship to the theme of repentance? What will you do in light of this?

Lastly, remember that God's forgiveness is for you through Jesus Christ's work on the cross for you.

Psalm 86:5- For You, Lord, are good, and ready to forgive, and abundant in mercy to all those who call upon You.

Psalm 103:12- As far as the east is from the west, so far has He removed our sins from us.

September 11 (Day 2)

National Repentance- To being this time of national repentance, please read this section from Daniel 9:

Then I set my face toward the Lord God to make request by prayer and supplications, with fasting, sackcloth and ashes.

And I prayed to the Lord my God, and made confession, and said, "O Lord, great and awesome God, who keeps His covenant and mercy with those who love Him, and with those who keep His commandments, "we have sinned and committed iniquity, we have done wickedly and rebelled, even by departing from Your precepts and Your judgments.

Neither have we heeded Your servants the prophets, who spoke in Your name to our kings and our princes, to our fathers and all the people of the land. O Lord, righteousness belongs to You, but to us shame of face, as it is this day - to the men of Judah, to the inhabitants of Jerusalem and all Israel, those near and those far off in all the countries to which You have driven them, because of the unfaithfulness which they have committed against You.

O Lord, to us belongs shame of face, to our kings, our princes, and our fathers, because we have sinned against You. To the Lord our God belong mercy and forgiveness, though we have rebelled against Him.

We have not obeyed the voice of the LORD our God, to walk in His laws, which He set before us by His servants the prophets. Yes, all Israel has transgressed Your law, and has departed so as not to obey Your voice;

. . . yet we have not made our prayer before the LORD our God, that we might turn from our iniquities and understand Your truth.

And now, O Lord our God, who brought Your people out of the land of Egypt with a mighty hand, and made Yourself a name, as it is this day- we have sinned, we have done wickedly!

O Lord, hear! O Lord, forgive! O Lord, listen and act! Do not delay for Your own sake, my God, for Your city and Your people are called by Your name.

So much of what Daniel cries out, we could cry out about our own nation. We as a people have gone astray. As we remember the events of 9/11 and the lives lost, pray for our nation. Stand in the gap and confess the sins of our nation, seeking God's forgiveness for each. Pray for any and all leaders the Lord brings to mind. Pray that our leaders and nation will repent and return to God, so that we will truly be "one nation under God".

September 12 (Day 3)

Church Repentance- While we love our church, no church is perfect. Every church is made up of sinful human beings who need the grace of Jesus. Allow the Lord to bring any sins of our church to mind. Consider the times we have not loved or served as we should have. Consider the ways we have not sought the heart of God, but merely plowed ahead with human plans. Think upon the times we as individuals have sinned, spread gossip, or not stepped forward as God called. Ask the Lord's forgiveness and ask Him to move powerfully in and through our Church. Ask for His Spirit to guide our leaders and keep them holy as He is holy.

September 13 (Day 4)

Seeking God's Guidance- As we begin this time of seeking God's guidance, consider these words from 2 Chronicles 20 when a multitude of enemies came against Judah.

And Jehoshaphat feared, and set himself to see the LORD, and proclaimed a fast throughout all Judah. So Judah gathered together to ask help from the LORD; and from all the cities of Judah they came to seek the LORD.

*O LORD God of our fathers, **are You not** God in heaven, and do You not rule over all the kingdoms of the nations, and in Your hand is there not power and might, so that no one is able to withstand You?*

*Are you not our God, who drove out the inhabitants of this land before Your people Israel (**did You not**), and gave it to the descendants of Abraham Your friend forever?*

*O our God, **will You not** judge them? For we have no power against this great multitude that is coming against us; nor do we know what to do, but our eyes are upon You.*

When we seek God's guidance, especially in challenging or pressing times, we need to remember who God is, what he has done, and what he will yet do. God is in control. He is in authority. He sees the end from the beginning and knows what place we all have to play in His grand masterpiece being worked out. With this in mind, we can confidently seek His guidance for all that lies ahead, including the parts we are to play.

The Lord has a place for each of us in the Body of Christ. He's given each of us gifts to build His Church and advance His Kingdom. What is He calling you to do this fall and beyond? Who is He calling you to reach out to? How is He calling you to serve in your workplace, in your social circle, and in the church? Ask Him these questions and wait in silence for Him to speak to your heart. Often our passions, Spiritual gifts, and skills are important clues to what He is calling us to.

Before praying, read 1 Corinthians 12 and Romans 12:1-13. Allow these truths about God's giftings and body life to be fresh in your mind as you pray.

September 14 (Day 5)

Re-commitment to God- Read these three verses with your heart open to the Holy Spirit. Read each passage three times over, slowing your reading each time. What is He speaking to you as you read? What words or phrases stand out, and why?

1 Samuel 7:3-6- Return to the Lord with all your hearts, put away foreign gods, prepare your hearts and serve God only.

Joel 2:12-13- 'Even now,' declares the LORD, 'return to me with all your heart, with fasting and weeping and mourning.' ¹³ Rend your heart and not your garments. Return to the LORD your God, for he is gracious and compassionate, slow to anger and abounding in love, and he relents from sending calamity.

Mark 12:30-31- And you shall love the Lord your God with all your heart, with all your soul, with all your mind, and with all your strength. This is the first commandment. And the second, like it, is this: You shall love your neighbor as yourself. There is no other commandment greater than these.

Take time to prayerfully re-commit your life to Jesus Christ. Commit to serving Him first above all else. He is King. Commit to seeking His voice. Commit to reading His Word. Commit to anything else the Lord places on your heart through this time with Him.

September 15 (Day 6)

Commitment to prayer- If we want to know God, and if we want to follow God, and if we want to serve God, we need to communicate with God. No marriage or deep friendship can survive, much less thrive without communication. How much more does this go with our relationship with God.

Read John 15:1-11. Allow Jesus' words about abiding in Him to guide your conversation with Him. Take time to recommit your prayer life to God, knowing that only through abiding in him in daily and moment-by-moment, speaking-and-listening prayer can you live a fruitful and full life (John 10:10). With this, commit to regular times of prayer during the day. This can be prayer after waking, prayer before bed, as well as other times during the day. May conversation with the Lord be foundational to our lives.

September 16 (Day 7)

A Day of Worship!

Read Psalm 103. Consider writing out your own praises for who God is and what He has done for you over the past week and past months. Then praise Him for who He will continue to be for you in the months to come.

Join together with the church family at 6:30 PM at ABC for a special praise and worship evening, completing these special seven days with worship as the church family!

Thank you for joining us in our Fall Focus Week!