

21 DAYS

PRAYER & FASTING

-REFOCUS-
AUGUST 8-28TH



COMMUNITY
CHURCH

REFOCUS: 21-Day Devotional Guide

We are excited that you have made the commitment to REFOCUS during the 21 Days of Prayer and Fasting with Community Church! We pray that you will experience the presence and power of God in an extraordinary way as you commit yourself to Him over the next 21 days. May you be closer to God than ever before as you seek Him first.

As you prepare for the next 21 days, think about what you are praying for and why you are fasting. As a community we are focusing on our present as well as our future as we seek more of God's power and presence in our lives. However, what does that look like personally? Are you praying and fasting for spiritual growth, guidance, healing, for the resolution of problems, for grace to handle a difficult situation, or for a major decision? Identifying your focus will enable you to pray specifically and strategically.

When praying, make your primary goal to know Jesus more and to experience Him. Do your best to make time to pray daily. But don't overcomplicate this! Just talk to God. Have a place and time where you can seek Him every day. The key is to be intentional about that time.

Fasting is a principle that God intended for everyone to be able to enjoy. It's not a punishment; it's a privilege! By incorporating fasting into your everyday life, you become closer to God and grow in your spiritual life like never before and that's our goal! Many people believe the first week is the hardest during a fast. It's new and at times feels awkward, but don't give up! If fasting from food, symptoms like grumpiness, sleepiness, headaches,

and cravings are normal because your body is detoxing. The detox part can last for as few as 3 days, but it normally takes a week to feel fully refreshed.

During this fast, it will require you to be intentional about what you choose to give up. It will cost your convenience, your comfort, and it will also take some serious willpower and commitment. ***For more information on the principles and practices of fasting please visit communitych.com***

What will your sacrifice be during this fast? Make sure it's something that stretches and challenges you. Make your commitment in writing and share it with a friend who will hold you accountable to your commitment.

We look forward to all that God has in store for us as we let go, lean in and turn our focus toward the things that matter most. May God pour out his power upon your life as you take this journey with us!

Day 1- Romans 12:11-12

How close do you feel to God? Most of us sense that there's more to a relationship with God than what we currently are experiencing. Many of us start out following Jesus with plenty of excitement and passion but over time the enthusiasm seems to subside and our relationship with Jesus becomes passive at best. There are the highs and lows and a lot of mundane in-betweens. It should be unsettling to us that somehow a daily relationship with God... the God of the universe...can end up passionless, passive, mundane and monotonous. A passionate, thriving relationship with God should be the norm, not the exception for every follower of Christ. Maintaining a fresh,

exciting, passionate relationship with God is something we must literally fight to protect. We have a very real enemy who wants nothing more than to see us settle into mediocrity and miss out on God's best for our lives. Maybe at one time you were excited about God but now, if you're honest, you know other things have grabbed your attention. Or maybe you are far from God and struggling with addictive behaviors or other issues. (And, by the way, we all have issues.) The good news is that the limitless potential for a lasting, thriving relationship with God is available to us.

Over the next 21 days we believe your relationship with God can and will be refreshed as you experience the power and presence of God in your life like never before.

Take a moment to reflect on your relationship with Jesus: What is your biggest obstacle to experiencing the zeal and passion described in Romans 12:11-12? Write that down. Pray and ask God to ignite or reignite a passion in your relationship with Jesus.

DAY 2- 1 John 1:9, 2 Corinthians 5:17, Galatians 5:1

Why do we fast? You can do it for the right reasons or the wrong reasons. Fasting is not to get God to change His mind about something. Fasting is also not something we do to obtain favor or forgiveness. Once you ask for forgiveness and receive Jesus Christ as your Lord and Savior, your past, present and future sins have already been forgiven! Fasting is a way of celebrating the goodness of God and that because of Jesus; we have already received God's mercy, forgiveness, and favor. In the Old Testament the mindset was "do in order to become"

but because of Jesus there is a New Covenant. This New Covenant has a main operating principle that says, “you already are, therefore act like it” --- rejoice and celebrate that Christ has set you free.

DAY 3- Matthew 6:16-18, Psalm 16:11, Psalm 145:18-19

It's day 3 and you are still feeling unsure about this 21-day thing. There are parts you like but you aren't sure if this is really for you. There are unfortunate misconceptions that fasting is only for the serious, super Christians or for times of crisis and some even think fasting is only an Old Testament thing. Nothing could be further from the truth. You might be unsure or maybe you've never fasted before but when practiced the right way, fasting is something that everyone should enjoy. There is closeness to God that you simply will not experience from prayer or personal devotions alone. You get a revelation of God's Word when you fast that you simply cannot get any other way. Disconnecting from the distractions of our world through fasting and connecting into the power and presence of God through prayer, brings with it a fresh experience with God.

What step(s) do you need to take today to be open to what God wants to do in your life?

DAY 4- 1 Corinthians 6:19, Mark 8:36, Matthew 11:29, John 7:38

How do you view yourself? In today's scripture reading the Apostle Paul, describes our body as a temple of the Holy Spirit. Do you ever think about yourself being a temple? As we live our lives, over time we all have the habit of becoming a little more than messy. While we have been made new in Christ, our soul,

which is the intersection of our mind, will and emotions, can become weighed down, heavy, negative, and sluggish. In other words, our temple is a wreck. Even if you are going to church, reading your Bible, and worshiping there are times when you just need a good heart cleanse to make your life fresh again. The constant demand on our mind, the distractions, and the noise can weigh us down and put us in a spiritual fog. Life has a way of stacking on the pressure and pain, which causes our emotions to get out of whack. As we get tired and weighed down, our conscience can become desensitized, not really bothered by things that once convicted us. God's voice is slowly muffled, and we begin to lose our passion. We shift into autopilot, operating from a position of obligation or routine in our relationship with God, instead of one of love, excitement, and compassion. Fasting hits the reset button of our soul. To receive the new things God wants to bring into our lives, we have to periodically hit the reset button. Along with your fasting, and as you focus in on the scriptures, make sure you slow your pace and remove distractions. Try to add times of silence and solitude along with your fasting.

DAY 5- Ephesians 2:4-10

One of the reasons prayer and fasting are so powerful when combined is that together they activate a chain reaction where we see God's kingdom revealed in our life. When we seek God there is agreement, alignment, and assignment. When we agree with who God is and what he can do, we become aligned with God's perfect will on earth as it already is in heaven. When we are aligned with the will of God, we find that God can use us in ways we never thought possible; and we live in the purpose

that God created us to fulfill. God created each of us with purpose. You are a masterpiece designed by God to make a difference in this world. God is the only one who can truly inform you of that purpose, and in order to fulfill it, you will need His power that he promises to those who place their faith in him.

Spend some time today thinking about the unique skills, and abilities that God has created you with and all that you are passionate about. There's a reason for it. In prayer, seek God about how he wants to use you to impact those around you as you continue discover or develop your purpose.

DAY 6- Matthew 6:33, Psalm 9:10

Prayer and fasting are about making room for God. When you want something new and exciting to happen in your life, then you have to create some space. Think about that new thing that you want God to do in your life. Think about that problem that is blocking your path that you need God to remove. As much as God wants to do something amazing in your life, He is a filler, not a forcer. Too often we spend so much time and energy trying to figure out and anticipate every scenario. We want God to do this; we want God to do that. But all the while God is saying, "Just create a little space for Me, and I'll come in and fill it."

DAY 7- John 10:10

Passionate Christianity should be the norm for every follower of Jesus —not the exception! We should never settle for a stale, mundane, dull, boring relationship with God. A relationship with Jesus should be an incredible lifetime adventure.

Read John 10:10 again, then pause and pray. Ask God to fill you with a passionate, expectation of the more he has in store for your life. Don't settle! Guarding the fire of devotion in your heart is the most foundational discipline of your life. Refuse to accept a faith experience that is far below what God intended for you.

Maybe you have tried to participate in this fast but have found yourself stumbling along the way. I want to encourage you to keep going. Don't be discouraged by looking at the times you gave in to the things you were fasting from. Just keep going, keep clearing things out of the way so that God can fill you up. Be encouraged by this: when we draw near to God, He draws near to us.

Congratulations on finishing your first week of fasting and prayer. Don't stop now. Continue to take a next step!

As you complete the first week of your 21-day fast, make sure you are writing down the things that God is speaking to you. Continue to pray boldly for the concerns in your life. Trust God to bring an answer as you journal your thoughts and inspirations during this time.

DAY 8- Luke 4:42, Proverbs 4:25-26

The hardest decisions to make are usually not between what is good and bad. Usually, the most difficult decisions are between what is good, and what's better. It is so important to be able to connect with Jesus and to do our best to hear the voice of God when facing important decisions. Jesus regularly disconnected from his surroundings to be alone with God so that he could seek direction and be refreshed by his time with God.

There are all sorts of things that will try to crowd God out of your life. Jesus faced pressure from the crowds, and he had to choose between doing well and doing God's will. The crowds constantly tugged on Jesus to heal them or to do another miracle. What might have happened if Jesus had listened to the voice of the crowds? He would have possibly settled for a lot of good, while potentially missing his greater purpose. That is exactly what can happen in our lives if we're not intentionally removing the distractions, getting alone with God and seeking his direction in our life.

Would you take some time today and be intentional about finding a place where you can spend some focused, uninterrupted time alone with God. Where is that, what does that look like, what distractions do you need to remove?

Day 9- John 3:16, 1 John 4:8-9, 1 John 4:19, John 13:34- 35

Today we are focusing on God's love. The way we can grow in our love for God and others is by focusing on His love for us. God's love is endless, and it comes freely without any condition; He loves us no matter what we have or haven't done. When you focus on God's love, His joy and peace will follow. Your feelings will follow what you focus on. That's why it's so important to focus on the goodness of God. If you focus on your faults, you will always feel like a failure. However, if you focus only on everything you think you do well it can easily open the door to pride.

The good news is that God's love for us is not based on our performance. If we try to come to God based on our performance, guess what? It will never be good enough. None

of us could ever be that good; only Jesus was able to do that. That's why we choose to focus on God's unconditional love for us.

Spend some time focusing on God's love for you and ask Him to give you a fresh picture of how much He loves you. Ask God to help you by his power at work within you to begin to love like he does.

DAY 10- Matthew 16:24

It's interesting that you can know God yet never completely surrender your life to Him. Your sins can be forgiven, and you can be on your way to eternity with Jesus, but you can still live your life as the one in control. It seems as if we want to add God to our lives, but only certain parts of our lives.

We love to be in the driver's seat even when we know we have no idea what we're doing. Prayer and fasting is about getting out of the driver's seat and getting in the passenger seat. To truly surrender means giving God your whole life and discovering the reality, joy, peace, freedom, feelings, and experiences that come with truly knowing God. We often think that this is a one-time decision, but it's actually a practice we must regularly engage in to keep our relationship with Jesus whole and healthy.

Jesus is asking you a question, "Will you let me drive? Will you give me complete control? If you want all of me, then I need all of you."

Today, will you tell Jesus to have His way in your life? What areas of your life are you withholding from God? What are the

areas that you prefer to be in control of? During your prayer time today would you consider giving God the things that you have been holding onto and watch how He moves and directs your life in ways you never thought possible.

DAY 11- Ephesians 5:15-20

When we experience distance or disconnect in our relationship with Jesus for whatever reason, surrendering again is the first step to rekindling the fire within! It is important to start each day with complete surrender. As we learned yesterday, surrender is more of an ongoing process rather than just a one-time decision. Full surrender to God means no more going back and forth with one foot doing whatever we want and the other foot wanting God's best.

Following Jesus is all or nothing. In fact, the surrendered life is the best life. It's the only real way to live as a follower of Jesus. But to get there, you've got to step out of the boat to find out. This means total surrender. No more halfway stuff. You can't be a part-time Christian. God wants you to be a full-time follower of Jesus. When you fully surrender to God, you are filled with His Spirit and are awakened to His presence as we step into the limitless life with Jesus.

Spend some time in prayer today seeking more of God's presence in your life. Ask God to continue to reveal anything in your life that may be a barrier to a closer relationship with him.

DAY 12- Ephesians 2:8-9, 2 Peter 3:18

Grace is the foundation for a relationship with God. If we get grace wrong, then we pursue God in wrong ways. We don't

pray, fast, or read our Bibles to get God to love us more. It's not possible for God to love us more than he loves us right now, and His love for us never changes. His love is not based on what we do, but it is based on what Jesus has done! Grace is undeserved favor. The way we love God more is by focusing on His love for us.

As you prepare to head into your weekend it is our prayer that you would do so with an awareness of the love of God. As you move through your plans, would you choose to be attentive to all the ways you observe the love of God for you. Maybe even document it, write them down and see how many examples you have by the end of the weekend. We pray for a grace awakening in your life that you will realize how loved and accepted and forgiven you are by God. You can't earn God's love and grace; you have to accept it, receive it, believe it, trust in it and walk in it.

DAY 13- Psalm 100

When we look at our life, we can usually identify the things we are most passionate about. It could be anything from family to sports, education to hobbies, the environment you name it. It's easy to talk about what we are passionate about. God created us to be passionate about what we love. You can see this in football fans. When you watch a game there is one undeniable truth about true fans: they are passionate. As the cameras pan the crowd, you will see passion. The fans have pompoms. They are wearing team colors. They are screaming. They may even be singing, and you better believe it's LOUD! The place rocks with passion because real fans are passionate about their team.

Whatever you are passionate about, you will also be emotional about. We as the church should exhibit passion. Living a limitless life is about igniting a deeper passion for God in your heart. If we say we love God and have embraced what he has done for us through Jesus, it should ignite a passion for him inside of us.

Ask God to ignite passion in you, to help you feel Him and express your feelings. As you prepare to join us at one of our campuses tomorrow, here's a challenge: Maybe you need to let your passion show? What does that mean? Maybe you will sing out loud? Let the tears flow, raise your hands for the first time, clap or move to a song? The possibilities are limitless when passion for Jesus rises up in us.

DAY 14- John 16:23-24

Jesus told his disciples to pray in HIS name. Do you know what that means? To pray in Jesus' name means to pray in alignment with His values. It means God has given us total access to His incredible power and unlimited resources. When we pray in the name of Jesus, it has the same power as if Jesus were praying Himself. A big difference between Jesus and us is that Jesus is always in complete alignment with His Father. This is why fasting is so important. Fasting is an effective way to help us refocus and really get in alignment with God. When we pray, we can come to God in the authority of Jesus' name, and we can be confident that we will find grace, mercy and perfectly timed help. Our prayers will not fall on deaf ears and will not go unanswered.

What are you praying for? What are the things you believe God for? Where do you need some breakthrough? What is God stirring in your heart? Be bold in your prayers today!

Way to Go! You have finished the first 14 days of Refocus. The best is yet to come. Continue in this final week with a heart full of expectation as you finish strong.

DAY 15- Matthew 6:9-13

A great way to begin each day is by focusing on who God is!

Make a choice today to focus on the goodness, the greatness, and glory of God. Focusing daily on these three attributes of God gives us a complete picture or filter of grace.

The Lord's Prayer is a great prayer to help us think about the goodness, the greatness and glory of God. When we call God our Father, it reminds us that we are His children. He loves, cares for, and provides for His children.

Mondays have a way of reminding us that life isn't easy. You can know that you are loved, and that God is good, but you can still be going through hard times. So, we not only need to focus on God's goodness, but we also need to set our minds on how great God is.

God is big and there is nothing too hard for him. He has all the power that we need to make it through tough times.

When you wake up this week make it a priority to set a right mindset. First things first – simply focus on who God is! Focus on His goodness, greatness, glory, and ask Him to help you see everything else through that filter.

Remember, it's not about what you do; it's about who God is. Give it a try.

You're starting the third and final week of your fast. If you're fasting with a friend, spouse, or group take time to reflect together and celebrate what God has begun. Even though you may feel like you're in a groove now, for many this final week will be harder than the others. Ask God to search you and begin to shine a light on all the dark corners of your heart. Ask Him to use this last week to refine and cleanse you as you create space for a move of God in your life.

DAY 16- Mathew 6:3-4, 6; 17-18

It's interesting: When God wanted to fill believers with the Holy Spirit, the most amazing filling of all, He didn't ask them to think it all through and figure out how that was going to happen. He also didn't force it upon them. He revealed what was in store for them and asked them to be ready, but then He asked them to create a space where it could happen.

Jesus tells us in Matthew 6:3-4, 6, 17-18 how we can create space. In these verses He doesn't say, "if." He says "when" you do these things. He assumed that those who follow him would want to create spaces in our lives for Him to fill with His rewards.

When you give, pray, or fast, you are creating space for God to do amazing things in your life.

Who do you need to pray for this week? Is there someone you need to bless, help, or come alongside? Be open today to God showing you how you can respond to others like he would.

DAY 17- Philippians 2:3-8

Contrary to what many people might think or mistakenly believe, humble service does not mean neglecting your own interests or needs. When you position your life to serve, you take a posture of humility, and it releases grace into your life. If serving is leading you to burnout rather than grace, then it's a sign that your serving may not be an expression of true humility.

God doesn't say that we must not care about our own interests. Devaluing our lives is false humility and will not position us to receive the grace of God. The humility that attracts God's grace into our lives is Jesus's humility, the kind that says, "I'm going to take the greatness on my life and use it to make You great."

DAY 18- 2 Corinthians 12:10

There's no way around it. God's process of growth in your life is going to involve weakness. This in-over-your-head journey of developing intimacy, dependence, and faith is going to bring you into situations where your natural strength, abilities, and energy are exhausted. When you begin to read the scriptures, you see that you can't avoid weakness as you follow Jesus. However, our attitude towards our weakness matters.

In the New Testament, everyone from Paul to Peter to James talks about this attitude. They don't talk about tolerating weakness or enduring weakness with gritted teeth. They used words like joy, rejoice, and delight. This attitude is completely upside-down and counter to our natural attitude toward weakness. Hardship, suffering, trials, and persecution—these are not experiences we naturally associate with joy.

Any experience that attacks our strength triggers fear and insecurity, which is usually the opposite of delightful, so the idea of trying to enjoy weakness strikes most of us as weird, almost wrong.

Where do Paul, Peter, and James come up with this attitude of rejoicing in weakness? They all give the same reason.

Experiencing weakness gives us access to two things we can get in no other way: deeper faith and supernatural strength.

DAY 19- Matthew 20:25-28

Jesus forever married the concepts of greatness, leadership, and royalty with the concepts of humility, love, and service. These are the three upside-down revelations of who Jesus is and who we are in Him. He is great and we are great in Him—but that greatness is expressed by becoming the least. He is a leader, and we are leaders in Him—but our joy as leaders who carry His authority is not in conquest; instead, our joy is in the One who chose us to represent Him. He is royalty, the true Son of the King, and we are royal sons and daughters in Him—we look like our father by demonstrating radical love and service.

As we step into the revelation of who we are in Him, we must cling to His example and never revert to the world's versions of greatness, leadership, and royalty, which turn humility into pride, authority into domination, and love into selfishness.

As you pray today, think through what specific ways or in what capacity is God stirring in your heart to serve and show the love of Jesus as you represent Christ wherever you go. Write those things down.

DAY 20- Psalm 127:1-2

We must place our hope in God's promises to build our house: to fulfill the vision He has put in our hearts, to make an impact, and step into the fullness of who He created us to be.

The author of this Psalm does not imply that there is no labor involved for us but that we are not to be in the lead position in this building project. God is the architect, the financial backer, the owner, the foreman, the building crew, and pretty much everything else. Our part is to cooperate with God as He builds us up to pursue the purpose and potential, he has put in us.

DAY 21- John 15:5-8, Matthew 7:16-20

God isn't satisfied with temporary results in our life. He's in the business of permanent change and total transformation. He's not looking for a month, or a year or a decade, of you growing more like Jesus and pursuing the things He calls you to do. He's looking for a lifetime impact, a generational impact, and an eternal impact. Abundant, ongoing fruitfulness is the mandate on our life. Ultimately, ongoing fruitfulness in your life, in our church and the rest of the body of Christ is the key to seeing lives changed, cities impacted, culture shaped, and nations transformed. But abundant, ongoing fruitfulness will only happen, Jesus says, if you "remain in" Him.

Take some time today for an observational inventory. Just take a look at your life, what kind of fruit do you see? Having trouble? Maybe ask someone you trust, what kind of fruit they see in me? Spend some time in prayer, ask God to show you the areas in your life that may be disconnected from him. Would you choose to take those areas and recommit them to Jesus?

This is the final day of this reading plan, but the journey that God has for you continues. We've been reminded of who we are in Christ and the things he has for us. He has plans for you. The journey is not an easy one. It requires focus and sacrifice. But it's so worth it because in Christ our future is limitless!

Congratulations on finishing well! You made it. Thank you for participating with us in this meaningful experience. We pray that you found this time of prayer and fasting to be refreshing, encouraging and a great next step in your personal spiritual journey.

Be sure to finish your time by praying a prayer of thanks to God for the closeness you've felt and the blessings you've received during this time of Refocus.

SHARE YOUR STORY!

We would love to hear how God has revealed himself to you during this 21-day experience. Share your story! Go to communitych.com and choose your campus, then click the "TELL YOUR STORY" Link on the home page. We can't wait to hear how God is moving in your life!