

**ENCOUNTER**

**21**  
**DAY**

**FASTING  
AND  
PRAYER  
GUIDE**

# ENCOUNTER

## FASTING AND PRAYER GUIDE

### WILL YOU GIVE GOD 21 DAYS?

A new year offers a fresh opportunity to encounter God. You're invited to join us on this 21 day journey of fasting and prayer. Through fasting, prayer, and reading the Bible, we will encounter God, encounter his vision for community, and encounter his mission for us to the world.

### FASTING

**THE VOLUNTARY DENIAL FROM A PARTICULAR ACTIVITY OVER A PERIOD OF TIME FOR AN INTENTIONAL SPIRITUAL PURPOSE.**

- A fast requires us to refrain from an activity. This activity isn't something sinful (we should always be eliminating sin from our lives!), but rather something God permits (i.e. food, media, leisure). What we give up should be something meaningful, like a meal, social media, or tv.
- A fast is temporary. We aren't quitting this activity forever. We're just not engaging in it for a predetermined amount of time.
- A fast requires an intentional spiritual purpose in order to connect more deeply with God. If we fail to pursue the spiritual purpose, then the fast can become all about us. If we're more excited about losing weight or gaining extra time in our day than connecting with God through prayer and reading the Bible, then something is wrong in our approach. It is important to keep our focus on getting closer to God through our fast.

### WHY FAST?

- We would probably all admit that we need a strong connection with God, but sometimes that connection experiences interference from the noise in our lives or the busyness of our schedule. Other times, we have a poor connection because we've simply grown complacent about our faith. And yet there are times when we're in a difficult situation that requires an even greater connection with God. Whatever the case, fasting is a spiritual discipline that can amplify our connection with God.
- Although the Bible doesn't explicitly command us to fast, it is a very effective way to turn our minds heavenward and pray (see Matthew 6:16 and 9:15). In fact, few things can remind us of God throughout the day like fasting. For example, when you get a headache because you are fasting from coffee, a twitch because you gave up Facebook, or a growling stomach because you are abstaining from food, these experiences should drive you back to God in prayer regarding your spiritual purpose.

### HOW TO FAST

- God doesn't want you to endanger your health by abstaining from food. If you are fasting from food, make sure you drink a lot of water. Staying hydrated is crucial. If you have a medical condition that prevents you from fasting from food or if you've battled an eating disorder in the past, do not fast from food. If you're not sure if you should be fasting from food, speak with your doctor first. There's nothing wrong with fasting from something other than food and God wants us to be wise in our fasting. If you cannot fast from food, fast from something that normally takes up a lot of your time and attention.
- Jesus warns us not to broadcast our fasting to others. It's ok to let others know you are fasting, but you shouldn't tell them in order to impress them. If you are trying to impress people through your fasting, then you've missed the point. Fasting is only valuable if it draws you closer to God.

# ENCOUNTER FASTING AND PRAYER GUIDE

## TYPES OF FAST

As you plan your fast here are some different types of fasts you can try for this time.

- **Full Fast:** Drink only liquids during your fast.
- **Daniel Fast:** This is based on the fast of Daniel and his friends as recorded in Daniel 1:11-16. Don't eat meat, sweets, or bread. Drink water and juice. Eat fruits and vegetables.
- **Partial Fast:** A partial fast means fasting during certain periods of the day. A partial fast is from 6am to 3pm, or from sunup to sundown. This fast can be a FullFast, a Daniel Fast, or a fast giving up at least one item of food.
- **Media Fast:** If you are unable to fast from food, take the time that you're normally watching TV, being on the internet, or scanning social media to focus it on growing your spiritual life.

## CREATE YOUR OWN:

Spend time praying about the things that take up your time and attention... time and attention you could devote to your walk with God. Decide to fast from those activities or items during these 21 days.

# ENCOUNTER GOD: DAYS 1 - 7

Seven days of devotional reading and prayer to bring you deeper into your relationship with God.

# ENCOUNTER

## DAY 1

### 1 Psalm 103:8-12

The Lord is compassionate and gracious, slow to anger, abounding in love. He will not always accuse, nor will he harbor his anger forever; he does not treat us as our sins deserve or repay us according to our iniquities. For as high as the heavens are above the earth, so great is his love for those who fear him; as far as the east is from the west, so far has he removed our transgressions from us.

This psalm quotes the words of the Lord to Moses in Genesis 34. In that passage, God revealed his character to Moses and described himself as compassionate, gracious, and loving. Since compassion and love are at the core of who God is, he is willing to forgive our sins. Forgiveness is based upon God's grace and love, and not because we deserve it. Thankfully, the God we encounter is a good God.

### Questions:

What is this passage saying?

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What is God saying to me through this passage?

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How can I apply this to my life today?

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## DAY 2

### Genesis 12:1-3

The Lord had said to Abram, "Go from your country, your people and your father's household to the land I will show you. I will make you into a great nation, and I will bless you; I will make your name great, and you will be a blessing. I will bless those who bless you, and whoever curses you I will curse; and all peoples on earth will be blessed through you."

In this passage, God establishes his relationship with Abraham (Abram until Genesis 17). God tells Abraham to leave everything he knows and go to a new land. In this new land, God will make him into a great nation and bless all the world through him. As we continue to read the Bible, we find that this promise to bless the whole world is fulfilled in Christ, the descendant of Abraham. Abraham's response to God's call was to obediently follow God in faith. God still desires the response of faith from us today.

### Questions:

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## DAY 3

### Joshua 1:7-9

“Be strong and very courageous. Be careful to obey all the law my servant Moses gave you; do not turn from it to the right or to the left, that you may be successful wherever you go. Keep this Book of the Law always on your lips; meditate on it day and night, so that you may be careful to do everything written in it. Then you will be prosperous and successful. Have I not commanded you? Be strong and courageous. Do not be afraid; do not be discouraged, for the Lord your God will be with you wherever you go.”

We encounter God in the pages of Scripture. This is why reading the Bible is so important for our relationship with God. This passage teaches us the importance of meditating on the Bible. The promise for doing this is great: we will have success in life. The success here isn't just because the Bible is filled with good wisdom, although it is. It's because the Bible draws us closer to the Lord. When we hear from Him and let Him guide our lives, we will experience success.

### Questions:

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## DAY 4

### John 15:4-5

“Remain in me, as I also remain in you. No branch can bear fruit by itself; it must remain in the vine. Neither can you bear fruit unless you remain in me. I am the vine; you are the branches. If you remain in me and I in you, you will bear much fruit; apart from me you can do nothing.”

The key to growth as a Christian is to be close to Jesus. Jesus uses the picture of a vine with branches to describe what life is like with him. If you stay near Jesus then you will flourish in life. However, if you are separated from Christ or allow things to get in the way of your relationship with Him, then you can't grow. Strive to get closer with Jesus and allow Him to bear fruit in your life.

### Questions:

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## DAY 5

### Psalm 34:8-10

Taste and see that the Lord is good; blessed is the one who takes refuge in him. Fear the Lord, you his holy people, for those who fear him lack nothing. The lions may grow weak and hungry, but those who seek the Lord lack no good thing.

God wants you to experience a relationship with Him. This means that you have a real encounter with the living God. God doesn't want you to have merely an intellectual pursuit of Him. The psalmist teaches us that as you draw closer to God you will experience his goodness. Many people who reject God have never experienced the goodness and help He provides. This passage is an invitation to test and experience the goodness of God in your life.

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## DAY 6

### John 5:39-40

“You study the Scriptures diligently because you think that in them you have eternal life. These are the very Scriptures that testify about me, yet you refuse to come to me to have life.”

Jesus spoke these words to people who were very religious. They read the word of God, but they didn't experience intimacy with God. Reading the Bible is about more than just gathering information. We read the Bible to encounter the God who inspired Scripture and who acts throughout its pages. Reading God's word is intended to draw you closer to Him. Don't read the Bible, but miss out on Jesus.

### Questions:

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## DAY 7

### Isaiah 6:1-3

In the year that King Uzziah died, I saw the Lord, high and exalted, seated on a throne; and the train of his robe filled the temple. Above him were seraphim, each with six wings: With two wings they covered their faces, with two they covered their feet, and with two they were flying. And they were calling to one another: "Holy, holy, holy is the Lord Almighty; the whole earth is full of his glory."

It's important for us to be constantly reminded about who God is. He is the holy, sovereign, creator of the universe. He is so glorious that when angels approach him they must cover their faces. The angels' repetition of "holy" is meant to communicate to us the depth and richness of God's moral perfection. When we come before God, we come before a gracious and compassionate God who is also holy and to be worshipped.

### Questions:

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# ENCOUNTER COMMUNITY: DAY 8-14

Seven days of devotional reading and prayer to help you develop biblical community.

# ENCOUNTER

## DAY 8

### Hebrews 10:24-25

And let us consider how we may spur one another on toward love and good deeds, not giving up meeting together, as some are in the habit of doing, but encouraging one another—and all the more as you see the Day approaching.

Other people play a vital role in our relationship with God. Through mutual encouragement, we can grow in doing good deeds and love toward others. While it is tempting to live the spiritual life alone, God intends for us to walk with others. We must not fall into the trap of thinking our relationship with God is a solitary journey.

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## DAY 9

### Matthew 22:37-40

Jesus replied: "Love the Lord your God with all your heart and with all your soul and with all your mind.' This is the first and greatest commandment. And the second is like it: 'Love your neighbor as yourself.' All the Law and the Prophets hang on these two commandments."

Jesus simplified the commands of Scripture to two things: love God and love others.

All of God's law is based on these two foundational principles.

Jesus's words remind us of the primacy of

love in the life of a Christian. Christianity is about relating to each other in love. Jesus envisions radical relationships where we put the needs of others ahead of our own.

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## DAY 10

### Philippians 2:1-4

Therefore if you have any encouragement from being united with Christ, if any comfort from his love, if any common sharing in the Spirit, if any tenderness and compassion, then make my joy complete by being like-minded, having the same love, being one in spirit and of one mind. Do nothing out of selfish ambition or vain conceit. Rather, in humility value others above yourselves, not looking to your own interests but each of you to the interests of the others.

Consider the humility of Christ. Jesus is a co-equal member of the Trinity. He's fully God. Yet, He set aside his divine privileges in order to become human and die on the cross for our sins. God wants His people to have this same humility in their lives. This is a call for unity and being fully concerned with the needs of others.

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## DAY 11

### **Colossians 3:12-14**

Therefore, as God's chosen people, holy and dearly loved, clothe yourselves with compassion, kindness, humility, gentleness and patience. Bear with each other and forgive one another if any of you has a grievance against someone. Forgive as the Lord forgave you. And over all these virtues put on love, which binds them all together in perfect unity.

Just like you put on a fresh pair of clothes everyday, God wants you to put on Christlike qualities everyday. These are character qualities created in the believer through the power of the Spirit. As you walk with God, these are fruits of the Spirit that he will produce in you. This passage teaches us that we must make the conscious choice to pursue these character qualities. We aren't ready for the day until we put on these virtues.

### **Questions:**

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## DAY 12

### Proverbs 17:17

A friend loves at all times, and a brother is born for a time of adversity.

This proverb teaches us the importance of friendship and how to be a true friend. A godly friend will be with us through the ups and downs of life. They will stand by us in our greatest struggles. This tells us what kind of friend we need to be for others. We are there for people in their greatest time of need. We bring love to people in all seasons.

### Questions:

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## DAY 13

### **Ephesians 4:2-6**

Be completely humble and gentle; be patient, bearing with one another in love. Make every effort to keep the unity of the Spirit through the bond of peace. There is one body and one Spirit, just as you were called to one hope when you were called; one Lord, one faith, one baptism; one God and Father of all, who is over all and through all and in all.

One of God's great desires for his people is that they would experience unity. Unity is challenging for people. We hurt each other, offend each other, and say unkind things towards each other. Yet, unity is a sign that we are part of God's people. This is why we set aside offense to pursue unity.

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## DAY 14

### 1 Peter 3:8-9

Finally, all of you, be like-minded, be sympathetic, love one another, be compassionate and humble. Do not repay evil with evil or insult with insult. On the contrary, repay evil with blessing, because to this you were called so that you may inherit a blessing.

When someone offends you the natural response is to seek revenge. You want to hurt them back. You might even be able to justify this. After all, you were sinned against. Yet, God calls us to a higher standard. When we are insulted or sinned against, we are called to forgive. This is what God has done for us and we are to do for others.

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# ENCOUNTER GOD'S MISSION TO THE WORLD: DAYS 15 - 21

Seven days of devotional reading and prayer to bring you deeper into your relationship with God.

# ENCOUNTER

## DAY 15

### Psalm 96:1-3

Sing to the Lord a new song; sing to the Lord, all the earth. Sing to the Lord, praise his name; proclaim his salvation day after day. Declare his glory among the nations, his marvelous deeds among all peoples.

We were created to worship God. Worship involves declaring the greatness of God and telling others about what he has done in your life. Worship is what we will do in heaven, and it is meant to mark the life of the believer today. As a Christian, you are meant to live each day pointing others to the greatness of God.

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## DAY 16

### Romans 10:13-15

“Everyone who calls on the name of the Lord will be saved.” How, then, can they call on the one they have not believed in? And how can they believe in the one of whom they have not heard? And how can they hear without someone preaching to them? And how can anyone preach unless they are sent? As it is written: “How beautiful are the feet of those who bring good news!”

The hope of every person is that if they call on the name of Jesus they will be saved. But if no one tells them about Jesus, how can they trust in Him? The message of Jesus spreads as God’s people go out into the world and tell others about God’s love for them. As challenging as it might be, God wants you to be part of those who bring the good news.

### Questions:

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## DAY 17

### 2 Corinthians 5:18-20

All this is from God, who reconciled us to himself through Christ and gave us the ministry of reconciliation: that God was reconciling the world to himself in Christ, not counting people's sins against them. And he has committed to us the message of reconciliation. We are therefore Christ's ambassadors, as though God were making his appeal through us. We implore you on Christ's behalf: Be reconciled to God.

The great gift of the Gospel is that we are reconciled to God in Christ. This gift isn't just something for us to receive, but also something to share with others. This gift is the ministry of reconciliation. It's the privilege of telling others about Jesus Christ. When we do this, we are God's ambassadors. In those special moments, God makes his appeal to others through us.

#### Questions:

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## DAY 18

### **Matthew 9:36-38**

When he saw the crowds, he had compassion on them, because they were harassed and helpless, like sheep without a shepherd. Then he said to his disciples, "The harvest is plentiful but the workers are few. Ask the Lord of the harvest, therefore, to send out workers into his harvest field."

How true Jesus's words remain today. The harvest refers to the people in the world who need to hear the word of God and need to receive God's love. The mass of people are like sheep without a shepherd. As God's workers, it's our privilege to tell those who need it about the love of God. We should join in on Jesus's prayer for more workers, and we should answer the prayer by going into God's vineyard.

### **Questions:**

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## DAY 19

### Isaiah 55:10-11

As the rain and the snow come down from heaven, and do not return to it without watering the earth and making it bud and flourish, so that it yields seed for the sower and bread for the eater, so is my word that goes out from my mouth: It will not return to me empty, but will accomplish what I desire and achieve the purpose for which I sent it.

God's word is powerful. It changes lives. It draws you closer to God. Isaiah shows us that God's word will accomplish all of God's purposes for it. In the Bible we find our purpose and mission for our lives. We can live our lives knowing that when we pursue God's mission we will find success. This is because God's word will not fail.

### Questions:

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## DAY 20

### Isaiah 6:6-8

Then one of the seraphim flew to me with a live coal in his hand, which he had taken with tongs from the altar. With it he touched my mouth and said, "See, this has touched your lips; your guilt is taken away and your sin atoned for." Then I heard the voice of the Lord saying, "Whom shall I send? And who will go for us?" And I said, "Here am I. Send me!"

When Isaiah sees the glory of God, he becomes deeply aware of his sinfulness. God uses a coal to symbolically show Isaiah that he is forgiven by God. Having received forgiveness, he is ready to be used by God to bring God's message to the world. The Lord says the same thing today, "Who will go?" Our response needs to be the same as Isaiah, "Send me!"

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## DAY 21

### **Matthew 28:18-20**

Then Jesus came to them and said, "All authority in heaven and on earth has been given to me. Therefore go and make disciples of all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit, and teaching them to obey everything I have commanded you. And surely I am with you always, to the very end of the age."

All authority rests in Jesus Christ. He is the risen Lord of the universe. He sends out his people in the power of his Spirit to accomplish his mission. We find this mission clearly in this passage. God calls us to make disciples of all people. This is your mission whether you've been a Christian for 21 years or 21 days. We point people to the love of God in Christ Jesus.

### **Questions:**

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