

Antioch Movement-Wide

Prayer & Fasting

(October 9-11, 2017)

From October 9 to 11, Epicentre will be joining our sister churches in the Antioch Movement for a time of seeking the Lord and praying for our nation. Our nation has been facing increasing challenges the last several months - the devastation of hurricanes in Texas, Florida and Puerto Rico; the horrible mass shooting in Las Vegas; the riots in St. Louis; protests in various places and sports events because of racial injustice; immigration/DACA policy; increase of human trafficking, ongoing fight with terrorism, and tension with North Korea etc. All of these can be overwhelming and at times make us all feel helpless. As the people of God, however, we know the ultimate answers lie not in politicians or policies, but in God alone. And as salt and light in the world, it is our responsibility to take the lead and clear the way for God's Kingdom to come to our land. God said in Ezekiel 22:30,

"I looked for someone among them who would build up the wall and stand before me in the gap on behalf of the land so I would not have to destroy it, but I found no one."

Let's be a people that when God looks, He finds us standing in the gap on behalf of the land of America and her people in this critical time of history! Let's rise up and be the Church! Join us in our 3-day prayer and fast this week!

(Info on the discipline of fasting and suggestions are on the last couple pages of this guide)

The guiding scripture for our Movement-Wide Prayer & Fasting is from Acts. 4:31,

*"After they prayed, the place where they were meeting was shaken. And they were all filled with the Holy Spirit and spoke the word of God boldly."
(Acts 4:31, NIV)*

There are three radical elements of church life we see in Acts 4:31

- Radical intercession (read how they poured out their hearts in prayer in Acts 4:24-30)
- Radical fellowship (they gathered together under persecution, prayed together, gave to one another in Acts 4:32)
- Radical evangelism (they spoke the word of God boldly)

These "3 Radicals" will be the theme for our daily prayer focus.

**Please join us at our Family Prayer Time (7-9pm)
on Wednesday, Oct. 11 at the Heimbach Room
(1605 E Elizabeth St., Pasadena, CA 91104)**

RADICAL INTERCESSION (Monday, October 9)

“[I]f my people, who are called by my name, will humble themselves and pray and seek my face and turn from their wicked ways, then I will hear from heaven, and I will forgive their sin and will heal their land.”

(2 Chronicles 7:14, NIV)

“Revival begins when people turn to God. It breaks forth from intercessory prayer and continues when people repent and no longer tolerate sin in their lives.” (Kenneth Copeland)

History tell us every revival was preceded by a united prayer movement. It has always been God’s desire to forgive people’s sins and heal their land, and He told us the way He would do it - it would be in response to His people, humbling themselves, praying and seeking His face and turning from their wicked ways. Our intercession and repentance, as believers, is necessary for breakthrough in our nation.

Therefore, before we begin interceding for our nation, let’s pray for the Body of Christ in America because the Church is meant to be the atmosphere changer, so that her prayers and actions cause a shift in the direction of the nation.

Pray for the Church in America:

- To be convicted of the way we have not been the salt and light we are called to be in our spheres of influence, to repent and receive God’s forgiveness;
- To be given courage to turn and step up/out in our roles as atmosphere changers in our respective cities, first through intercession, then through action;
- To be filled with the love of the Father for our nation that causes our hearts to cry out in intercession day and night, contending for breakthrough and revival to come to our land.

Let’s pray radical prayers for America! Pray:

- For the Holy Spirit to come in power and love in visible ways that will lead people to repentance and turn to God as in the book of Acts;
- For the fear of the Lord to fall on our government leaders, that they will realize they need God and His wisdom to tackle the complex issues we are facing as a nation.

RADICAL FELLOWSHIP (Tuesday, October 10)

“Then we will no longer be infants, tossed back and forth by the waves, and blown here and there by every wind of teaching and by the cunning and craftiness of people in their deceitful scheming. Instead, speaking the truth in love, we will grow to become in every respect the mature body of him who is the head, that is, Christ. From him the whole body, joined and held together by every supporting ligament, grows and builds itself up in love, as each part does its work.”

(Ephesians 4:14-16, NIV)

Jesus repeatedly commanded his disciples to love one another in John 13-17. Unity in the Body of Christ prophetically models to the world how we are to relate to one another and is key to spiritual breakthrough and revival in our land. This unity is not just within the Epicentre family, or among churches in our Antioch movement, but across our nation regardless of denomination, tradition, or political views. We are called to speak truth to each other in love, building one another up so that we mature as a united Body where every part is doing what it’s supposed to do. Unfortunately, Biblical unity is still lacking in the American Church today, when our nation needs it most from us.

Pray for the Church in America:

- To hear afresh the call to love and unity as Christ’s Body, that we will not be afraid to reach out to each other to help and also to speak the truth in love when needed - all of us only see in part as Paul tells us in 1 Corinthians 13;
- To keep choosing love and unity no matter how hard it is, that we will model what it looks like to consider others better than ourselves, and look out to other’s interests besides our own (Philippians 2).

Pray for America:

- For the Spirit of love, honor and unity to rise to defeat the spirit of hate, anger and division;
- For barriers between people’s hearts to dissolve, especially barriers that have been caused by race, gender identity, sexual orientation, political allegiance etc. - it may seem impossible in our human eyes, but let’s ask for a miracle of radical change in our society. Nothing is impossible with God! And if we don’t ask and believe for it as believers, who will?!

RADICAL EVANGELISM (Wednesday, October 11)

*“Speak out on behalf of the voiceless, and for the rights of all who are vulnerable. Speak out in order to judge with righteousness and to defend the needy and the poor.”
(Proverbs 31:8-9, CEB)*

What does “speaking the word of God boldly” mean today, considering what’s going on in our nation? For sure it is being bold in sharing the Gospel story of salvation because only this leads to the abundant life, but it also means that we must speak out on behalf of those who have no voice, and speak up for those who are marginalized and oppressed. The Good News of the Kingdom is salvation and more! To speak boldly the word of God is to speak God’s Kingdom into existence in practical ways on the earth.

Pray for the Church in America:

- To be filled with faith and courage to stand up and speak out for those who have no voice or whose voice is not being listened to or taken seriously, even if it means we ourselves will be ridiculed or persecuted;
- To know how to proactively seek cultural and systemic change in our nation that will promote the values of the Kingdom - justice, freedom, love and respect.

Pray for America:

- To be convicted of the ways we have not lived out the biblical value to honor the image of God in each person, and that that burden of conviction will be so heavy on our hearts that we will begin making changes in our personal behavior as well as government policies to reflect this belief;
- To be delivered from the spirit of indifference and self-protection, that we will begin to care for one another more, not just when there’s a crisis or tragedy, but that we would be formed in to the caring and generous people we are meant to be as a nation.

About Fasting

Fasting is a spiritual practice where we intentionally give up something in our lives in order to make space and time to seek God more passionately. It is an act of humility, coming before God and acknowledging that we do not live by bread (material things) alone but by Him and His Word. Thus, the primary focus and purpose of fasting is God and intimacy with Him.

A time of fasting is also an opportunity for us to examine ourselves, allowing the Holy Spirit to reveal to us areas of our lives that need to be transformed and that which enslaves our spirits. In his book, *Celebration of Discipline*, Foster wrote,

“...fasting reveals the things that control us. This is a wonderful benefit to the true disciple who longs to be transformed into the image of Jesus Christ. We cover up what is inside us with food and other good things, but in fasting these things surface. If pride controls us, it will be revealed almost immediately. David writes, ‘I humble my soul with fasting’ (Ps. 69:10). Anger, bitterness, jealousy, strife, fear – if they are within us, they will surface during fasting. At first we will rationalize that our anger is due to our hunger; then we will realize that we are angry because the spirit of anger is within us.” (p.55)

When food and other good things are purposefully denied, the condition of our hearts reveals itself. Not only will we discover things that control us, but we will also see more clearly the “disorder” in our lives – we might come to discover we have given more attention and priority to things that really are not that important when seen under the Light of Christ. Fasting really is a journey of freedom - *from* things that bind and blind us *to* real freedom of spirit.

It is important to point out the importance of prayer during a time of fasting. As said above, fasting leads us to discover and deal with areas of bondage in our lives and hearts. But the taking off or shedding of enslaving things in our lives needs to go hand in hand with filling ourselves with more of Christ. Prayer gives space for the Holy Spirit to do that. In prayer, the Spirit does the work of revealing, delivering, healing, and transforming. As Foster says, “Fasting is feasting!” (p.55) So as you fast these next few days, make more time to be in God’s Presence in worship and in prayer. Let your hearts be opened to encounter Jesus and His truth. Then, in that place of intimacy and freedom, allow the Holy Spirit to pray through you for our nation!

Fasting Options

Below are different fasting options you may consider. Pray and ask God which one He wants you to do. One helpful question to aid your prayerful decision is, “what thing(s) tend to distract me from hearing God’s gentle whisper or what am I willing to give up to show God I love Him more?”

Four Different Types of Food Fasts

(from *The Reward of Fasting*, Mike Bickle, pp. 77-78)

1. **Regular fast** is one in which we go without food, drinking only water or liquids that have no calories.
2. **Liquid fast** is one in which we go without solid foods and drink only light liquids, such as fruit juices or soup. Most people do not include milk shakes in this type of fast.
3. **Partial fast**, sometimes called a Daniel fast, is one in which we abstain from tasty foods and eat only certain things, like vegetables or nuts. John Wesley often fasted on bread and water. Those with hypoglycemia or other medical conditions can engage in a partial fast by being creative.
4. **Benedict Fast**, established by Saint Benedict of Nursia, Italy (525 ad), is one in which we eat only one meal a day. Many monks in the monasteries of Europe lived this way for years and had strong bodies and even stronger spirits.

Media/Entertainment/Social Media Fast:

Fast from media/entertainment/social media except news and what is necessary to do one's job, and give greater attention to the Spirit and clear space in our hearts to commune with God.

Schedule fast:

Go through your schedule. What are some things you can cut out for 3 days, and make more time for Jesus.

Check out Bill Bright's 7 Basic Steps to Successful Fasting and Prayer for tips on preparing for a time of prayer and fasting practically and spiritually.
<http://www.cru.org/train-and-grow/devotional-life/7-steps-to-fasting.1.html>

Suggestions for Families

Fasting can be a very rich experience for families as each family commits to seeking God together. Obviously, it may not be wise to ask small children to skip a meal since their bodies are still growing and developing. However, there are other ways children can practice and learn the practice of fasting:

1. Talk to your child(ren) about the purpose of fasting and what the Epicentre church family will be doing this week (Oct. 9-11). You can look into the Scriptures with them for examples of people fasting and what God did in response to their sacrifice. You may also share your own experience of fasting if you've done it before.
2. For younger children, include them in deciding what you can fast from as a family. Is it dessert or sweets? Or some yummy snacks that don't have much nutritional value? TV or video games? Don't be afraid to give them a little challenge! In place of these things, offer extra special healthy snacks, and have some very special extended family time. During family time, consider singing worship songs, reading a Bible story, praying for friends, families, and missionaries, or playing some games...make it fun and God-centered.
3. For children 10 and up, you may consider other options like fasting from meat for a meal or two a day. In its place, either serve something like tofu or beans, or simply serve vegetables with rice, spaghetti with plain sauce. You can even have them brainstorm what they want to fast from, which can also be a non-food option.

Whatever you decide to do, it's important to teach your children that the practice of fasting is not just subtractive (giving something up), but also additive (adding something), so that they understand one of the purposes of fasting is to create space so we can “feast” on God, His Presence and His Word.