

## **SEEKING GOD'S FACE**

For the second year in a row, the churches of the Bellarine and Surf Coast are coming together to fast and pray, seeking God's face (Psalm 27:8; 2 Chronicles 7:14).

### **Why are we doing this?**

#### **To walk in the unity that Jesus prayed for us**

Jesus prayed that His people would be one, just as He and the Father are one, so that the world would know Him (John 17:20-23). We desire to be a unified church that displays the diverse beauty of God, making known His manifold wisdom (Ephesians 3:10).

#### **To see God move**

We long to see God move in our region—to see people saved and restored (Acts 2:47; 2 Corinthians 5:17). We believe God is calling us to seek His face before we seek His hand (Psalm 105:4).

#### **To bring God's blessing**

God tells us that when His people dwell together in unity, He commands a blessing (Psalm 133:1–3). We desire to live under the headship of Jesus, our Lord and King (Colossians 1:18).

### **What we're encouraging you to do over this time.**

#### **Fasting to help you pray**

From February 8-22nd, we're inviting you to fast and pray and/or practice an area of self-denial. This is because Jesus assumed His followers would fast. He taught them to do so with humility as they sought God (Matthew 6:16-18).

#### **Sunday night corporate worship**

We will gather as church communities on Sunday nights, February 8 (CBTB), 15 (TCF), and 22 (Wave), at 6:30 pm to worship and seek God's heart together (Psalm 95:6; Acts 2:42).

#### **Prayer rooms**

We encourage you to utilise the prayer rooms in your churches. Consider booking a time individually or with your life group to seek God and pray, "Your kingdom come, Your will be done" (Matthew 6:10; Luke 11:9). Please check with your church for how to book a time.

#### **Daily messages**

We will send a daily message from the pastors to encourage us as we seek God together. Please check with your pastor about how to receive these messages.

## **Fasting: Understanding what it is and why fasting and prayer go together**

Fasting is the intentional abstaining from food for a set time to heighten our awareness of our dependence on God, acknowledging that He alone is the source of life (Deuteronomy 8:3; Matthew 4:4, Joel 2:12; Ezra 8:21–23). Throughout Scripture, fasting is regularly paired with prayer and often brings revelation, direction, repentance, and heart change (Joel 2:12–13; Ezra 8:21–23; Acts 13:2–3).

This is because we do not live by bread alone, but by every word that comes from the mouth of God (Matthew 4:4). Fasting, accompanied by prayer, re-centers our hearts on God as our true source of life and sustenance (Psalm 63:1; John 6:35).

Jesus assumes that His followers would both pray and fast (Matthew 6:5-6, 16-18). Yet despite this, fasting remains a neglected practice in the modern church. As John Mark Comer observes:

*“It’s one of the most powerful—and neglected—of all of Jesus’ practices.”*

### **Fasting and the governance of the Spirit**

In Romans 8, Paul contrasts a mind governed by the Spirit with one governed by the flesh (Romans 8:5-8). “Flesh” (*sarx*) refers to natural desires, good gifts from God (James 1:17), that are not meant to rule us.

As we deny bodily desires, fasting strengthens reliance on the Holy Spirit, reveals what controls us (1 Corinthians 6:12), and draws us into worship, fulfilling the greatest commandment (Mark 12:30).

Richard Foster writes, *“More than any other single discipline, fasting reveals the things that control us.”*

So why fast? It focuses on God as the source of life, preparing our hearts for the work God wants to do in and through us (Isaiah 58:6–11).

### **What fasting is and isn’t**

Some substitute fasting with giving up activities like social media. While this can foster self-control, a fruit of the Spirit (Galatians 5:22–23), it is not biblical fasting. True fasting involves denying physical desires, particularly food, to remind us that we depend on God for everything (Psalm 63:1).

### **Fasting wisely**

If you are new to fasting, consult a medical professional if needed. If you are pregnant, breastfeeding, or have a medical condition, fasting may not be appropriate. Caring for our bodies honours God (Proverbs 4:7; 1 Corinthians 6:19-20). So, if fasting from food isn’t possible, consider an intentional act of self-control to focus your attention on God (1 Corinthians 9:24-27).

### **Ways to fast**

Complete abstinence from food (Esther 4:16).

Partial fasting (skipping meals or foods), for example: skipping lunch, giving up coffee, or a Daniel fast (vegetables only; Daniel 1:8-16).

If fasting from food isn't possible, consider an intentional act of self-control.

Fasting is not meant to be easy. It is a conscious denial of fleshly desire to elevate the authority of the Spirit and deepen dependence on Him (Galatians 5:16-17).

### **How to fast**

Choose what you will fast from (Luke 4:1-2). Ask someone to be a prayer and accountability partner (Ecclesiastes 4:9-12). Decide what you'll replace it with, what prayer will you pray? (Colossians 3:1-2).

Set aside a daily time for prayer and reflection (Psalm 5:3; Mark 1:35). At the end, share what you learned with a life group or trusted friend.

Ask the Holy Spirit: **"Is there anything You are asking me to trust and obey?"**