

# FORMATION

SEPTEMBER - DECEMBER 2023

**CHURCH**  
OF THE CITY

## VISION

To see the fame & deeds of God renewed & known in our time.

## MISSION

Practicing the way of Jesus.

## PRESENCE OF GOD

We pursue the presence of God through individual & communal spiritual practices.

*Psalm 16:11 & John 15:9*

## FORMATION OF PEOPLE

We pursue deep change through transformational discipleship focusing on growth & healing.

*Romans 12:2 & 1 Peter 2:2*

## UNITY OF THE CHURCH

We pursue the unity of the church family across racial, political, generational & economic divides.

*Psalm 133 & Mark 11:17*

## FLOURISHING OF THE CITY

We pursue the spiritual, social & cultural flourishing of our city.

*Jeremiah 29:7 & 1 Timothy 6*



Church of the City Family,

We are thrilled to intentionally study Scripture together as we practice the way of Jesus. Whether this is your first time using this journal or you have been with us since the start—it is our hope that this will allow us to pursue deep change through transformational discipleship.

*“Do not conform to the pattern of this world, but be transformed by the renewing of your mind. Then you will be able to test and approve what God’s will is—his good, pleasing and perfect will.” Romans 12:2*

We’ve provided this Formation Journal as a 7-day experience to develop habits that will transform your life and we’ve been intentional with its layout to provide participation options both daily and weekly.

On the following pages, you will find helpful information on how to use each section, along with prompts that may be helpful before you head into the daily and weekly sections of this journal. We suggest you spend time reading through the different ways we hope will maximize your time in the study of God’s Word.

We can’t wait to see what God will do in this season of our church.

*“Lord, I have heard of your fame; I stand in awe of your deeds, Lord. Renew them in our day, in our time make them known; in wrath remember mercy.”*

**HABAKKUK 3:2**

## SUNDAY SERVICE PAGES

Space is provided for you to write down notes from each Sunday's sermon and our hope is for these notes to prompt you to continue in reflection throughout the week. Additionally this will give you an opportunity to share what stood out to you with your family, friends, community group, or CORE group.

Questions for reflection after Sunday's service:

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*Hear: What is God saying to me?*

*Obeys: What is He asking me to do?*

*When and who will I share this with?*

## SATURDAY PAGES

As you reflect on the past week, spend time in silence asking these questions:

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*What stood out to me the most this week?*

*Was there a consistent theme I noticed?*

*How have I experienced God this week?*

*What have I been praying for and have I received an answer to any of these prayers?*

*Is there anything I should confess or bring before God?*

## DAILY PAGES

Each week we have provided pages that are dedicated to daily devotionals. Monday through Friday, we will give a longer portion of Scripture to read through, but will also provide a suggested portion of that Scripture to soak in, observe, apply, and pray about. We will have corresponding video content from our Pastors that will match these days. If you would like to receive these videos daily in text form, text COTCDAILY to 855-615-6150.

When spending your time in the selected Scripture, we suggest that you use the acronym - "SOAP." Read below to learn more about this method.

### SCRIPTURE

Read slowly and thoughtfully through the passage.

Pick a verse or two that stood out to you and write it in your journal.

### OBSERVATION

Write some observations about these verses. What is this passage or verse saying?

What does it reveal about God? About people? How is Christ revealed in this passage?

### APPLICATION

Write a few sentences on how these verses apply to your life. Is there a truth about God that you want to focus on? Is there a promise to receive and thank God for? Is the Holy Spirit convicting you of something you need to do or stop doing in light of God's truth?

### PRAYER

Write out a prayer to God in response to this Scripture. This is a way to turn God's Word to you back to Him. Be honest and express your heart to Him.

**SUNDAY, SEPTEMBER 17**

Notes:

[illegible]

**MONDAY, SEPTEMBER 18**

Matthew 1:1-17

☐ Scripture      ☐ Application

☐ Observation    ☐ Prayer

Additional Notes:

This image shows a blank sheet of white paper with horizontal ruling lines. The lines are evenly spaced and extend across the width of the page. There are no margins, text, or other markings on the paper.

## Daily Gratitude

Matthew 1:18-25

☐ Scripture      ☐ Application

☐ Observation      ☐ Prayer

This image shows a single sheet of white paper with horizontal blue or grey ruling lines. The lines are evenly spaced and run across the width of the page. There are approximately 20 lines visible. The paper has a slight shadow on the right side, suggesting it's resting on a surface.

Matthew 2:1-12

☐ Observation    ☐ Prayer

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Matthew 2:13-23

☐ Scripture      ☐ Application

☐ Observation      ☐ Prayer

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Matthew 3:1-12

[illegible][illegible]

**SATURDAY, SEPTEMBER 23**

## Reflection

As you reflect on the past week, spend time in silence asking these questions:

- *What stood out to me the most this week?*
- *Was there a consistent theme I noticed?*
- *How have I experienced God this week?*
- *What have I been praying for and have I received an answer to any of these prayers?*
- *Is there anything I should confess or bring before God?*

Notes:

[illegible]

**SUNDAY, SEPTEMBER 24**

Notes:

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Matthew 3:13-17

[illegible]

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Matthew 4:1-11

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[illegible]

**WEDNESDAY, SEPTEMBER 27**   ☐ Scripture   ☐ Application

□ Application

□ Observation

☐ Observation    ☐ Prayer

Additional Notes:

Daily Gratitude

Matthew 4:18-25

☐ Scripture      ☐ Application

☐ Observation      ☐ Prayer

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Matthew 8:1-13

[illegible][illegible]

**SATURDAY, SEPTEMBER 30**

## Reflection

As you reflect on the past week, spend time in silence asking these questions:

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- *What have I been praying for and have I received an answer to any of these prayers?*
- *Is there anything I should confess or bring before God?*

Notes:

[illegible]

**SUNDAY, OCTOBER 1**

Notes:

[illegible]



**MONDAY, OCTOBER 2**

Matthew 8:14-27

☐ Scripture      ☐ Application

☐ Observation      ☐ Prayer

Additional Notes:

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## Daily Gratitude

Matthew 8:28-34

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## Daily Gratitude

WEDNESDAY, OCTOBER 4

Matthew 9:1-17

☐ Scripture      ☐ Application

☐ Observation    ☐ Prayer

Additional Notes:

[illegible]

## Daily Gratitude

Matthew 9:18-38

☐ Scripture      ☐ Application

☐ Observation      ☐ Prayer

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Matthew 10:1-23

Additional Notes:

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**SATURDAY, OCTOBER 7**

## Reflection

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**SUNDAY, OCTOBER 8**

Notes:

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Matthew 10:24-42

☐ Scripture      ☐ Application

☐ Observation      ☐ Prayer

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Matthew 11:1-19

☐ Scripture      ☐ Application

☐ Observation      ☐ Prayer

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WEDNESDAY, OCTOBER 11

Matthew 11:20-30

☐ Scripture

☐ Observation    ☐ Prayer

Additional Notes:

## Daily Gratitude

Matthew 12:1-29

[illegible][illegible]

Matthew 12:30-50

Additional Notes:

[illegible]

**SATURDAY, OCTOBER 14**

## Reflection

As you reflect on the past week, spend time in silence asking these questions:

- *What stood out to me the most this week?*
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**SUNDAY, OCTOBER 15**

Notes:

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**MONDAY, OCTOBER 16**

Matthew 13:1-35

☐ Scripture      ☐ Application

☐ Observation      ☐ Prayer

Additional Notes:

[illegible]

## Daily Gratitude

Matthew 13:36-58

☐ Scripture      ☐ Application

☐ Observation      ☐ Prayer

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**WEDNESDAY, OCTOBER 18**

Matthew 14:1-21

☐ Scripture      ☐ Application

☐ Observation    ☐ Prayer

Additional Notes:

## Daily Gratitude

Matthew 14:22-36

☐ Scripture      ☐ Application

☐ Observation      ☐ Prayer

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**FRIDAY, OCTOBER 20**

Matthew 15:1-20

☐ Scripture      ☐ Application

☐ Observation      ☐ Prayer

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## Daily Gratitude

**SATURDAY, OCTOBER 21**

## Reflection

As you reflect on the past week, spend time in silence asking these questions:

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**SUNDAY, OCTOBER 22**

Notes:

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**MONDAY, OCTOBER 23**

Matthew 15:21-39

☐ Scripture      ☐ Application

☐ Observation      ☐ Prayer

Additional Notes:

[illegible]

## Daily Gratitude

Matthew 16:1-12

☐ Scripture      ☐ Application

☐ Observation      ☐ Prayer

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**WEDNESDAY, OCTOBER 25**

Matthew 16:13-28

☐ Scripture      ☐ Application

☐ Observation    ☐ Prayer

Additional Notes:

## Daily Gratitude

Matthew 17:1-13

☐ Scripture      ☐ Application

☐ Observation      ☐ Prayer

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**FRIDAY, OCTOBER 27**

Matthew 17:14-27

☐ Scripture      ☐ Application

☐ Observation      ☐ Prayer

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## Daily Gratitude

**SATURDAY, OCTOBER 28**

## Reflection

As you reflect on the past week, spend time in silence asking these questions:

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**SUNDAY, OCTOBER 29**

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**MONDAY, OCTOBER 30**

Matthew 18:1-20

☐ Scripture      ☐ Application

☐ Observation    ☐ Prayer

Additional Notes:

## Daily Gratitude

Matthew 18:21-35

☐ Scripture      ☐ Application

☐ Observation      ☐ Prayer

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**WEDNESDAY, NOVEMBER 1**      ☐ Scripture      ☐ Application  
Matthew 19:1-15      ☐ Observation      ☐ Prayer

Matthew 19:1-15 ☐ Observation ☐ Prayer

☐ Scripture      ☐ Application

☐ Observation    ☐ Prayer

Additional Notes:

Daily Gratitude

Matthew 19:16-30

☐ Scripture      ☐ Application

☐ Observation      ☐ Prayer

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**FRIDAY, NOVEMBER 3**

Matthew 20:1-16

☐ Scripture      ☐ Application

☐ Observation    ☐ Prayer

Additional Notes:

## Daily Gratitude

**SATURDAY, NOVEMBER 4**

## Reflection

As you reflect on the past week, spend time in silence asking these questions:

- *What stood out to me the most this week?*
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Notes:

[illegible]

**SUNDAY, NOVEMBER 5**

Notes:

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**MONDAY, NOVEMBER 6**

Matthew 20:17-34

☐ Scripture      ☐ Application

☐ Observation      ☐ Prayer

Additional Notes:

[illegible]

## Daily Gratitude

Matthew 21:1-27

☐ Scripture      ☐ Application

☐ Observation      ☐ Prayer

[illegible]



Matthew 21:28-46

[illegible][illegible]

Matthew 22:1-22

☐ Scripture      ☐ Application

☐ Observation      ☐ Prayer

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**FRIDAY, NOVEMBER 10**

Matthew 22:23-46

☐ Scripture      ☐ Application

☐ Observation    ☐ Prayer

Additional Notes:

## Daily Gratitude

**SATURDAY, NOVEMBER 11**

## Reflection

As you reflect on the past week, spend time in silence asking these questions:

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**SUNDAY, NOVEMBER 12**

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**MONDAY, NOVEMBER 13**

Matthew 23:1-12

☐ Scripture      ☐ Application

☐ Observation    ☐ Prayer

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## Daily Gratitude

Matthew 23:13-39

[illegible][illegible]

**WEDNESDAY, NOVEMBER 15**    ☐ Scripture    ☐ Application  
Matthew 24:1-35    ☐ Observation    ☐ Prayer

**WEDNESDAY, NOVEMBER 15**    ☐ Scripture    ☐ Application  
Matthew 24:1-35    ☐ Observation    ☐ Prayer

**WEDNESDAY, NOVEMBER 15**    ☐ Scripture    ☐ Application  
Matthew 24:1-35    ☐ Observation    ☐ Prayer

**WEDNESDAY, NOVEMBER 15**    ☐ Scripture    ☐ Application  
Matthew 24:1-35    ☐ Observation    ☐ Prayer

[illegible]

**THURSDAY, NOVEMBER 16**

Matthew 24:36-51

☐ Scripture      ☐ Application

☐ Observation    ☐ Prayer

Additional Notes:

[illegible]

## Daily Gratitude



Matthew 25:1-30

Additional Notes:

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**SATURDAY, NOVEMBER 18**

## Reflection

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**SUNDAY, NOVEMBER 19**

Notes:

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**MONDAY, NOVEMBER 20**

Matthew 25:31-46

☐ Scripture      ☐ Application

☐ Observation      ☐ Prayer

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## Daily Gratitude

Matthew 26:1-16

[illegible][illegible]

**WEDNESDAY, NOVEMBER 22**   ☐ Scripture   ☐ Application

Matthew 26:17-30

☐ Scripture      ☐ Application

☐ Observation    ☐ Prayer

Additional Notes:

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## Daily Gratitude

**THURSDAY, NOVEMBER 23**

Matthew 26:31-56

☐ Scripture      ☐ Application

☐ Observation    ☐ Prayer

Additional Notes:

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## Daily Gratitude

**FRIDAY, NOVEMBER 24**

Matthew 26:57-75

☐ Scripture      ☐ Application

☐ Observation    ☐ Prayer

Additional Notes:

## Daily Gratitude

**SATURDAY, NOVEMBER 25**

## Reflection

As you reflect on the past week, spend time in silence asking these questions:

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**SUNDAY, NOVEMBER 26**

Notes:

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**MONDAY, NOVEMBER 27**

Matthew 27:1-31

☐ Scripture      ☐ Application

☐ Observation    ☐ Prayer

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## Daily Gratitude

Matthew 27:32-56

[illegible][illegible]

**WEDNESDAY, NOVEMBER 29**    ☐ Scripture    ☐ Application  
Matthew 27:57-66    ☐ Observation    ☐ Prayer

**WEDNESDAY, NOVEMBER 29**    ☐ Scripture    ☐ Application  
Matthew 27:57-66    ☐ Observation    ☐ Prayer

Matthew 27:57-66 ☐ Observation ☐ PrayerMatthew 27:57-66 ☐ Observation ☐ Prayer

Additional Notes:

Daily Gratitude

Matthew 28:1-15

☐ Scripture      ☐ Application

☐ Observation      ☐ Prayer

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**FRIDAY, DECEMBER 1**

Matthew 28:16-20

☐ Scripture      ☐ Application

☐ Observation      ☐ Prayer

Additional Notes:

[illegible]

## Daily Gratitude

**SATURDAY, DECEMBER 2**

## Reflection

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Notes:

[illegible]

**SUNDAY, DECEMBER 3**

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**MONDAY, DECEMBER 4**

Isaiah 9:1-7

☐ Scripture      ☐ Application

☐ Observation    ☐ Prayer

Additional Notes:

[illegible]

## Daily Gratitude

Luke 1:1-23

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WEDNESDAY, DECEMBER 6

Luke 1:24-38

☐ Scripture

☐ Observation    ☐ Prayer

Additional Notes:

## Daily Gratitude

Luke 1:39-56

[illegible]

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**FRIDAY, DECEMBER 8**

Luke 1:57-80

☐ Scripture      ☐ Application

☐ Observation    ☐ Prayer

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## Daily Gratitude

**SATURDAY, DECEMBER 9**

## Reflection

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**SUNDAY, DECEMBER 10**

Notes:

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**MONDAY, DECEMBER 11**

Luke 2:1-7

☐ Scripture      ☐ Application

☐ Observation    ☐ Prayer

Additional Notes:

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## Daily Gratitude

Luke 2:8-14

☐ Scripture      ☐ Application

☐ Observation      ☐ Prayer

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Luke 2:15-20

☐ Observation    ☐ Prayer

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Luke 2:21-35

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Luke 2:36-40

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**SATURDAY, DECEMBER 16**

## Reflection

As you reflect on the past week, spend time in silence asking these questions:

- *What stood out to me the most this week?*
- *Was there a consistent theme I noticed?*
- *How have I experienced God this week?*
- *What have I been praying for and have I received an answer to any of these prayers?*
- *Is there anything I should confess or bring before God?*

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**SUNDAY, DECEMBER 17**

Notes:

[illegible]

**MONDAY, DECEMBER 18**

Luke 2:41-52

☐ Scripture      ☐ Application

☐ Observation    ☐ Prayer

Additional Notes:

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## Daily Gratitude

Luke 4:14-21

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**WEDNESDAY, DECEMBER 20**    ☐ Scripture    ☐ Application  
 Isaiah 12    ☐ Observation    ☐ Prayer

**WEDNESDAY, DECEMBER 20**    ☐ Scripture    ☐ Application  
 Isaiah 12    ☐ Observation    ☐ Prayer

**WEDNESDAY, DECEMBER 20**    ☐ Scripture    ☐ Application  
 Isaiah 12    ☐ Observation    ☐ Prayer

**WEDNESDAY, DECEMBER 20**    ☐ Scripture    ☐ Application  
 Isaiah 12    ☐ Observation    ☐ Prayer

[illegible]

Isaiah 53

[illegible]

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I Timothy 3:16

Additional Notes:

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**SATURDAY, DECEMBER 23**

## Reflection

As you reflect on the past week, spend time in silence asking these questions:

- *What stood out to me the most this week?*
- *Was there a consistent theme I noticed?*
- *How have I experienced God this week?*
- *What have I been praying for and have I received an answer to any of these prayers?*
- *Is there anything I should confess or bring before God?*

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**SUNDAY, DECEMBER 24**

Notes:

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**MONDAY, DECEMBER 25**

The next several days will be devoted to helping you prepare well for the 21 Days of prayer and fasting we'll engage in as a church beginning January 1. Each year this is such a transformational time for so many and we believe it will be the same for you if you take the time to engage and ask God to move and meet you in an unforgettable way.

We understand there are different factors that lead to your decision to say yes to participation in this church-wide commitment. We want to do the best we can to help provide three different ways to engage with this fast. We do not presume to be authoritative or comprehensive in the correct ways to fast, but we have chosen these pathways after thoughtful consideration about how to include everyone in the journey we feel called to in this season. As a church, we've purposed that our fast will be directly connected to food, as we see multiple examples of this throughout the Scripture.

For some, this will be the first time to pray in such a focused and intentional way. It may seem a bit daunting. We suggest you begin by praying through Matthew 6:9–13. As we engage this fast together, please know there are a variety of resources available on our website specifically related to fasting. It's our conviction we see the power of the Gospel unleashed when the people of God truly seek Him through prayer and fasting. We are excited and hopeful to see how the Lord is glorified as we head into this season.

*Biblical fasting is refraining from food for a spiritual purpose and our primary focus in fasting is to fix our eyes on Jesus and to listen to hear the voice and direction of God. It is vitally important for us to pay attention to our motives behind the commitment we've made. We fast because it helps to give us balance in life. It makes us more keenly sensitive to the whole of life so that we're not so obsessed by our consumer mentality. -Richard J. Foster*

## Reflection

*Pray through Matthew 6:9–13 and use this space to journal a specific prayer to God asking how He'd have you engage with the options to fast. In addition, be specific and bold, asking Him to intentionally meet you in the coming days.*

[illegible]This image shows a full page of blank handwriting practice paper. It features approximately 28 evenly spaced horizontal grey lines across the entire page, providing a guide for letter height and placement. The lines are uniform in color and thickness, set against a plain white background. There are no margins, text, or other markings present.

**TUESDAY, DECEMBER 26**

As you consider one of the three options below, we encourage you to push outside your comfort zone rather than choosing an option requiring the least impact on your day to day life. Fasting isn't intended to be easy or comfortable. It's intended to be transformative, and a break from the normalcy of life so that you may experience the nearness and power of God in a life-altering way. Seeking the Lord intentionally shouldn't be just another item on the to-do list, or the thing we hope to squeeze into our already busy lives and schedules. It is intended to be a sacrifice and a discipline, saying no to food that satisfies our physical hunger. In this we hope to bring that physical hunger, and that deeper spiritual one, to God and rely on only Him to satisfy us.

These are the three options available for participating in the 21 Days of Prayer and Fasting with our church:

### Option 1 (Varied Weeks)

*Week One:* A commitment toward fasting from all food except water, juice, and other broths for the first 7 days.

*Week Two:* A commitment toward fasting from all meals, except the incorporation of one meal into the schedule during days 8–14 (e.g., fasting all day until 6PM).

*Week Three:* A commitment towards fasting for one meal out of the day, with an intentional time of focused prayer during the time period normally spent eating during days 15–21.

### Option 2 (All Meals)

This will be a commitment toward fasting from all food except for water, juice and other broths for the duration of the 21 days of the fast.

### Option 3 (Some Meals/Altered Diet)

This will be a commitment toward fasting for a significant portion of your day, incorporating only 1–2 meals into your schedule (e.g., fasting all day until 6:00 PM).

Or, due to medical and other considerations, it may be necessary to participate by altering your diet for the duration of the fast (this may be with vegetables only, or something known as the Daniel Fast).

The practice of fasting is in stark contrast to most of the way we live on a day to day basis. The Bible mentions fasting over 70 times directly and it is inferred many more. This practice was clearly important to God, as even Jesus engaged in a 40-day fast immediately following His baptism.

## Reflection

*While praying through the options, ask the Lord which one He is leading you to and why. Continue journaling increased specifics of what you're praying for during the 21 Days and ask the Lord if there are any specific prayers He would put on your heart for you to engage with.*

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**WEDNESDAY, DECEMBER 27**

Because of the nature of fasting, there are some certain changes you can expect as you take this journey. We'll highlight these below as well as a series of scriptures we recommend praying through. On Thursday and Friday we'll provide practical ways you can prepare for this special spiritual journey.

## Heightened Emotional Sensitivity

*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 know we are angry because the spirit of anger is within us. We can rejoice in this knowledge because we know that healing is available through the power of Christ. —Richard Foster*

No, it's not your imagination that during fasting everything and everyone can seem more annoying and every little thing is irritating and frustrating. When food is taken away, we lose one of the primary ways we cope with stress, anger, resentment, fear, anxiety, and other unsavory emotions. The gift of fasting is the way it holds a microscope over buried things needing to be excavated. But this can also be the most overwhelming part of fasting as well. Preparation is key in ensuring we don't give up before we give the Holy Spirit a chance to do His work within us through the fast.

## Physical Effects

Changing the amount and type of nutrients you intake on a regular basis could affect your energy levels, leading to physical fatigue. Headaches have been known to be a symptom during fasting, as well as feeling flu-like or experiencing digestive issues as you begin. While we are not medical professionals, and this is not prescriptive regarding the specifics of your health personally, we do know that slight changes in these areas is not necessarily indicative of a problem, but a result of toxins and other unhelpful substances leaving your system. Often the first several days of the fast are the hardest, followed by an increased feeling of ease, less focus on what you're missing, and an increased expectation of what's being gained spiritually.

## Intense Hunger

Although this may seem like an obvious point of awareness, it is important to note you may feel hunger in a way that you've not experienced before. This is the primary indicator and reminder for times of prayer and listening during the fast. Often, the best way to engage with prayer is to let your physical hunger be your reminder. It's amazing what happens to your physical hunger when you engage with God and ask Him to satisfy and satiate you in a way nothing else can.

*What you have learned and received and heard and seen in me—practice these things, and the God of peace will be with you. -Philippians 4:9*

## Reflection

*As you consider what type of fast God is calling you to, be honest in prayer with Him about any concerns or anxiety surrounding it. And ask for a sense of His peace and nearness as you prepare.*

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**THURSDAY, DECEMBER 28**

Now that you have some idea of how God is leading you to engage, we want to unpack six ways to prepare for this journey. We will cover three of them today and the last three tomorrow as we close out this year together.

## Prepare Your Prayer

- Consider the ways we are praying together for our church. We want to see unity among the body of Christ and we know it must begin with us. We are hoping for fulfillment of vision and purpose for our COTC family. We are praying we see many come to know Christ as their Savior and Redeemer in 2024.
- Pick up or download our 2024 Formation Journal so you are able to follow along with our daily Scripture readings, COTC Daily, and our Sunday morning messages. There's such power in knowing we're all journeying together, rather than the lie of isolation the enemy would have us believe.
- Identify some friends and partners to be praying with through this time. Life was intended by God to be lived in community. A trusted group of friends, your community group, or other supportive relationships are critical as you take this sometimes difficult journey.

## Prepare Your Mind

- Spend some time considering the real implications of how this fast will affect your regular life rhythms. For example, think through how your daily schedule will be altered and engage some forethought on how to adjust properly. Planning ahead will be one of the most helpful keys to successfully experiencing this fast.
- Ask the Lord to prepare your mind for the challenge in the days ahead. It takes a mind grounded in truth to be able to withstand the temptations that come with peer pressure in social settings or the pangs of extreme hunger, especially when accompanied by unpleasant emotions.
- Meditate on Scripture and stories that are reminders of God's faithfulness and ability to sustain. Psalm 100, Matthew 4:1–4, and Matthew 6:25–26 are a few examples.

## Prepare Your Heart

- Ask God to identify potential areas of difficulty during the 21 days. Do you see the potential for emotions like anger, anxiety, and fear to rise up during this fast? Are there areas of sin you are aware of and have not confessed and repented of before God?
- Spend some time in confession and repentance concerning any areas the Spirit reveals to you. 1 John 1:9 says this: If we confess our sins, he is faithful and just to forgive us our sins and cleanse us from all unrighteousness. Asking yourself difficult and direct questions and answering with honesty will help you enter this fast in a posture ready to receive. (Example questions to ask yourself: Am I honest in all my acts and words or do I exaggerate? Do I pass on what has been said to me in confidence? Am I the same person in public and in private? Are there any areas of secret sin or sinful attitudes/habits I am harboring?)
- Ask the Lord to show you any areas of discord or disunity in your life relationally and seek to address them.

## Reflection

*Pray through the areas above and respond with specific obedience to anything the Spirit brings to your mind.*

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**FRIDAY, DECEMBER 29**

As we prepare over these last few days of 2023, here are the last three practical steps you can take to be ready for our journey.

## Prepare Your Body

- Drink plenty of water. While this may not seem crucial, it is an essential part of maintaining proper hydration leading up to the fast.
- Eat healthier foods (fruits and vegetables) immediately before the start of the fast in order to facilitate an easier transition. Avoid overindulging in sweets, artificial sugars, and processed foods. When the fast is complete, be mindful of easing back into your regular diet to prevent shock to your system.
- If you have potential medical concerns, you should visit your doctor to ensure you are physically able to participate as you intend. A chronic or severe medical condition such as diabetes or heart disease, may prevent you from fasting in the manner you'd like. You should also consult your doctor if you are pregnant or nursing to gain insight on fasting in the most informed way.

## Prepare Your Schedule

- Take time to pre-plan what types of juices, liquids, and supplies you will need while fasting. If you are planning to drink juices for part or all of the fast, prepare for this by purchasing a portable cooler to take with you to work, ball games, and other gatherings where supplies are not readily available. This practice will keep you from being at the mercy of unhelpful food and drink options while out.
- Think about when you will set aside time to pray and when you will partake in liquids throughout the day. Remember, hunger is a great alarm clock for intentional and focused times in prayer.
- Discuss with family and those in your household about what the upcoming days will look like together.

## Prepare Your Response

*“And when you fast, do not look gloomy like the hypocrites, for they disfigure their faces that their fasting may be seen by others. Truly, I say to you, they have received their reward. But when you fast, anoint your head and wash your face, that your fasting may not be seen by others but by your Father who is in secret. And your Father who sees in secret will reward you.”*

-Matthew 6:16-18

- In hopes of avoiding pride or self-congratulation, we don't want to broadcast our fasting journey publicly. But when asked directly, prepare a thoughtful response for others that avoids shaming or boasting and protects the integrity of the intimacy you are gaining with the Lord.
- When someone asks why you aren't eating, consider simple ways to communicate your decision to dedicate yourself toward prayer and listening to God. Seek to respond in a simple and straightforward way.

- Consider beforehand how to graciously communicate with those who may invite you to a meal or gathering. (e.g., As you are preparing for the gathering, please note that my family and I are praying and fasting together in this season, so we may not fully take part in the meal portion of the evening. Thanks for understanding.) We are aware that since we're on a church-wide journey, fasting will not be done entirely in secret, but the spirit of Matthew 6:16–18 is to focus on the unseen intentions of the heart during fasting, not the outward celebration of our spiritual maturity or self-discipline.

It's our prayer that the 21 Days of Prayer and Fasting is transformational for you and for our church. We are with you and we believe God will do more than we can think or imagine because of His power at work within us.

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**SATURDAY, DECEMBER 30**

## Reflection

As you reflect on the past week, spend time in silence asking these questions:

- *What stood out to me the most this week?*
- *Was there a consistent theme I noticed?*
- *How have I experienced God this week?*
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**SUNDAY, DECEMBER 31**

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