21 DAYS

OF PRAYER AND FASTING

GULF SHORES
METHODIST CHURCH

JANUARY 11 - 31, 2026

Pray First

A Note from the Pastor

We are so excited to begin this journey of prayer together as a church family. Prayer is one of the vital components of our spiritual health — as individuals and as a body collectively. We look forward to this season of seeking God together at the beginning of a new year.

In 1 Thessalonians 5:16-18 Paul said we are too, “Rejoice always, pray continually, give thanks in all circumstances; for this is God’s will for you in Christ Jesus.” In other words, we need to develop the kind of prayer life that can help us work through any circumstance we face in this life. In order to do this we will need to make prayer a discipline. But as we do that over time it will become more than a habit. It will become a continual conversation we are having with God throughout our day. Just like we look forward to talking to the people we love, we will look forward to these conversations with God. When you discover the joy and depth that will come as a result of daily conversation with Him, you’ll also experience the presence of God in a new way that will change your life.

This simple prayer journal is designed to help facilitate this kind of spiritual discipline. I encourage you to stick with it for the next 21 days! Give yourself fully to consistently praying, reading scripture, fasting and recording your thoughts. Let God have more of your time.

We always think we're too busy for something like this. Trust God to give you back way more than you put in. I pray that these 21 days of seeking God will bring you joy, peace and a renewed excitement as you follow Him through this next year.

Thank you for doing this!

Blessings,

Pastor Sean Rezek

How to use this Guide

Each day you will find a scripture and short devotional thought, plus a one- to two-sentence prayer. Feel free to look up the scripture in your own Bible and spend time meditating on it, allowing it to shape your own prayers as you listen for what God may be saying to you through it. The sentence prayers are meant to be a starting point - pray them and then keep going! Don't be in a hurry to finish each day. The Psalmist tells us to "be still before the Lord and wait patiently for Him" (Ps. 37:7) and that when we do wait for Him, He will answer! (Ps. 40:1, 38:15)

For 2026's 21 Days we will be praying together for God to deepen our faith and grow in our love for Jesus as we consider a few of the spiritual disciplines as described in Richard Foster's classic Celebration of Discipline.

The phrase “spiritual discipline” simply refers to a practice, like prayer, bible reading, or fasting. The 21 Days of Prayer and Fasting itself is a spiritual discipline! Foster writes, “The desperate need today is not for a great number of intelligent people, or gifted people, but for deep people.” Tara Leigh Cobble of The Bible Recap says, “When a person’s faith grows, the spread of the gospel grows. As believers grow in depth, the gospel grows in width.”

May it be so with us as individuals and as a church – that as we grow and mature in our faith this year, the community and world around me is impacted by the gospel of Jesus as it is increasingly expressed through my life.

May this 21-day guide be a catalyst for your daily practice of waiting for the Lord each day, and learning to love the ways you find Him to be faithful as you seek Him in this way.

How to Pray

Very early in the morning, while it was still dark, Jesus got up, left the house and went off to a solitary place, where he prayed.

Mark 1:35

Pete Grieg offers three pieces of advice in his book *How to Pray: A Simple Guide for Normal People* about how to pray: *keep it simple, keep it real, keep it up.* He writes: "You've got to keep it simple so that the most natural thing in the world doesn't become complicated, weird, and intense.

You've got to keep it real because when life hurts, you're going to be tempted to pretend you're fine. And when you make a mess of things, you're going to be tempted to hide from God (which never really works) and end up hiding from yourself (which works quite well).And you've got to keep it up because life is tough, the battle is fierce and God is not an algorithm.

The journey of faith demands a certain bloody-mindedness of us all, not least in the realm of prayer.God invites you to pray simple, directly, and truthfully in the full and wonderful weirdness of the way he's made you."*

Another great piece of advice on creating a lifestyle of prayer is to find a time, a place, and a plan that you stick to each day for at least these 21 days.

*Grieg, Pete. How to Pray: A Simple Guide for Normal People. ©2019

How to Fast

The goal of fasting is to draw nearer to God. Biblical fasting always has to do with eliminating distractions for a spiritual purpose; it hits the reset button of our soul and renews us from the inside out. It also enables us to celebrate the goodness and mercy of God and prepares our hearts for all the good things God desires to bring into our lives. Remember, your personal fast should present a level of challenge, but it is very important to know your body, your options, and, most importantly, to seek God in prayer and follow what the Holy Spirit leads you to do.

Types of Fasts

Complete Fast

In this type of fast, you drink only liquids, typically water with light juices as an option.

Selective Fast

This type of fast involves removing certain elements from your diet. One example of a selective fast is the Daniel Fast, during which you remove meat, sweets, and bread from your diet and consume water and juice for fluids and fruits and vegetables for food.

Partial Fast

This fast is sometimes called the “Jewish Fast” and involves abstaining from eating any type of food in the morning and afternoon. This can either correlate to specific times of the day, such as 6:00 a.m. to 3:00 p.m., or from sunup to sundown.

Soul Fast

This is a great option if you do not have much experience fasting food, have health issues that prevent you from fasting food, or if you wish to refocus certain areas of your life that are out of balance. For example, you might choose to stop using social media or watching television for the duration of the fast and then carefully bring that element back into your life in healthy doses at the conclusion of the fast.

Timing of the Fast

At Gulf Shores Methodist, we would like to encourage fasting for 21 days as part of this season of focused prayer as a church family at the start of a new year. You may also choose to fast at other times during the year for your own spiritual development.

“Fasting can bring breakthroughs in the spiritual realm that will never happen in any other way. It is a means of God’s grace and blessing that should not be neglected any longer.” - Richard Foster

Daily Guide

Worship

Day 1 | January 11, 2026

Psalm 1:1-3
Blessed is the one who does not walk in step with the wicked or stand in the way that sinners take or sit in the company of mockers, but whose delight is in the law of the Lord, and who meditates on his law day and night. That person is like a tree planted by streams of water, which yields its fruit in season and whose leaf does not wither– whatever they do prospers.

The first Psalm describes the first inward spiritual discipline or practice, which is Christian meditation. As Richard Foster describes, “Christian meditation, very simply, is the ability to hear God’s voice and obey his word…the wonderful news is that Jesus has not stopped acting and speaking. He is resurrected and at work in our world.” (18-19)

Prayer: Lord Jesus, more than anything else let me desire the voice of the living God. I want to be mindful of your presence wherever I go, whatever I do. In every season, increase my faith so that my life will yield the fruit of Your Holy Spirit. Amen.

Day 2 | January 12, 2026

Psalm 42:1-2
As the deer pants for streams of water, so my soul pants for you, my God. My soul thirsts for God, for the living God. When can I go and meet with God?

God intends for ordinary human beings: "people who have jobs, who care for children, who wash dishes and mow lawns" to sense their own need for God and to nurture that need through practices like prayer, silence, and even service and worship.(1) The psalmist describes receiving strength, peace, and transformation through these times with God. Have you experienced a thirst for God's presence? What practices help you nurture the life of God in you?

Prayer: Dear Jesus, during these 21 days would you increase my thirst for You, and make me mindful of the times you are calling me to slow down and meet with God. Amen.

Day 3 | January 13, 2025

Psalm 42:7
Deep calls to deep in the roar of your waterfalls.

Perhaps somewhere in your soul you have heard the call to deeper, fuller living. This is the call of God to reject the ways of our "instant society" and instead commit to wait on the Lord (Ps. 27:14) in order to find the treasures hidden in the life with God.

Prayer: Holy Spirit, make me aware of the ways I conform to the patterns of this "instant society" world by constantly looking to my phone or the internet for answers. Instead, build patience and humility in me, that my life might better reflect Christ. Amen.

Day 4 | January 14, 2026

Psalm 27:7-8,11
Hear my voice when I call, Lord, be merciful to me and answer me. My heart says of you, "Seek his face!" Your face, Lord, I will seek. Teach me your way, Lord; lead me in a straight path because of my oppressors.

As we meditate on the Psalms that King David wrote, we discover that it is not only acceptable, but crucial that we learn to bring God our innermost longings and desires in prayer. Real prayer is life-creating and life-changing. (33)

Prayer: Lord God, teach me to pray. Use my prayers to grow in me my need and desire to be conformed to the image of Christ. Use my prayers to bring hope and healing into the lives of those around me. Amen.

Day 5 | January 15, 2026

Mark 1:35
Very early in the morning, while it was still dark, Jesus got up, left the house and went off to a solitary place, where he prayed.

“God always meets us where we are and slowly moves us along into deeper things.” Foster goes on to say that of all the spiritual disciplines, “prayer is the most central because it ushers us into perpetual communion with the Father.”

Prayer: God, I long for a deeper, more committed prayer life. Build in me the discipline of rising early in the morning to meet with You as Jesus did, listening for your voice for guidance and direction, as well as how to pray for my own life and especially for others. Amen.

Day 6 | January 16, 2026

Psalm 119:9-16
How can a young person stay on the path of purity? By living according to your word. I seek you with all my heart; do not let me stray from your commands.
I have hidden your word in my heart that I might not sin against you.
Praise be to you, Lord; teach me your decrees. With my lips I recount all the laws that come from your mouth. I rejoice in following your statutes as one rejoices in great riches. I meditate on your precepts and consider your ways. I delight in your decrees, I will not neglect your word.

The apostle Paul writes in Romans 12 that we are transformed by the renewal of our minds (12:2). The Psalmist declares that he longs for the transformation that comes from the study of God’s Word!

Prayer: Lord Jesus, I know it is so important for me to set aside time to study Your Words, alone but also with others. Lead me to a bible study group. Open my heart to even lead a new one, so that I might grow in my faith. Amen.

Day 7 | January 17, 2026

John 8:31-32
To the Jews who had believed him, Jesus said, "If you hold to my teaching, you are really my disciples. Then you will know the truth, and the truth will set you free."

"Many Christians remain in bondage to fears and anxieties simply because they do not avail themselves of the discipline of study. They may be faithful in church attendance and earnest in fulfilling religious duties, and still they are not changed...Why? Because they have never taken up one of the central ways God uses to change us."(67)

Prayer: Lord Jesus, I do not want anxiety or fear to control my life. I do not want to miss out on the good things you have in store for me! As I study your Word, let your truth take root in my heart. Let your truth set me free to love and serve You with my whole heart. Amen.

Day 8 | January 18, 2026

Isaiah 58:6-9
"No, this is the kind of fasting I want: Free those who are wrongly imprisoned; lighten the burden of those who work for you. Let the oppressed go free, and remove the chains that bind people. Share your food with the hungry, and give shelter to the homeless. Give clothes to

those who need them, and do not hide from relatives who need your help. “Then your salvation will come like the dawn, and your wounds will quickly heal. Your godliness will lead you forward, and the glory of the Lord will protect you from behind. Then when you call, the Lord will answer. ‘Yes, I am here,’ he will quickly reply.

“Fasting must forever center on God,” Foster writes. “More than any other discipline, 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.” (55) The prophet Isaiah tells God’s people in the passage above to stop thinking of fasting as simply a religious duty, but instead to use it as a means to allow the love of God to flow more freely through their actions and words.

Prayer: God, in this 21 days of prayer and fasting help me to deny myself, take up my cross and follow You into a life free from the love of money, possessions, or anything else that tends to take first place in my mind and heart. Amen.

Day 9 | January 19, 2026

Micah 6:8
No, O people, the Lord has told you what is good, and this is what he requires of you: to do what is right, to love mercy, and to walk humbly with your God.

One of the “outward disciplines” or spiritual practices is the discipline of simplicity. It is an “inward reality that results in an outward lifestyle.” (79) Scripture has much to say on how a person can resist the temptations of today’s culture to

fill our schedules and our homes with an insane amount of activity and possessions.

Prayer: God, create in me a longing for simplicity in my inner and outer life. Help me to let go of my quest for more and more material possessions, and even my longing to fill every second with stimulation or entertainment by endlessly scrolling through my phone or binge watching TV when I could be creating space to do good for others. I want with all of my heart to walk humbly with You, my great and loving God. Amen.

Day 10 | January 20, 2026

Matthew 6:19-21,19
"Don't store up treasures here on earth, where moths eat them and rust destroys them, and where thieves break in and steal. 20 Store your treasures in heaven, where moths and rust cannot destroy, and thieves do not break in and steal. 21 Wherever your treasure is, there the desires of your heart will also be...24 "No one can serve two masters. For you will hate one and love the other; you will be devoted to one and despise the other. You cannot serve God and be enslaved to money.

Prayer: Jesus, awaken my heart to the ways I am prone to value status and material possessions over my desire to live and serve You with my whole heart. Amen.

Day 11 | January 21, 2026

Matthew 6:25-34
"That is why I tell you not to worry about everyday life-

whether you have enough food and drink, or enough clothes to wear. Isn't life more than food, and your body more than clothing? Look at the birds. They don't plant or harvest or store food in barns, for your heavenly Father feeds them. And aren't you far more valuable to him than they are? Can all your worries add a single moment to your life?

"And why worry about your clothing? Look at the lilies of the field and how they grow. They don't work or make their clothing, yet Solomon in all his glory was not dressed as beautifully as they are. And if God cares so wonderfully for wildflowers that are here today and thrown into the fire tomorrow, he will certainly care for you. Why do you have so little faith?

"So don't worry about these things, saying, 'What will we eat? What will we drink? What will we wear?' These things dominate the thoughts of unbelievers, but your heavenly Father already knows all your needs. Seek the Kingdom of God above all else, and live righteously, and he will give you everything you need.

"So don't worry about tomorrow, for tomorrow will bring its own worries. Today's trouble is enough for today.

The central point for the discipline of simplicity is to seek the kingdom of God and the righteousness of his kingdom first and then everything necessary will come in its proper order….As Jesus made clear…freedom from anxiety is one of the inward evidences of seeking first the kingdom of God. (81)

Prayer: Lord Jesus, I want to know the freedom of living fully as You created me to, trusting in You to provide all of my

needs. Grow me spiritually and deepen my faith in You as I release my need to keep up with the pressure to find my joy and identity in an abundance of possessions. Amen.

Day 12 | January 22, 2026

1 Kings 19:11-13
"Go out and stand before me on the mountain," the Lord told [Elijah]. And as Elijah stood there, the Lord passed by, and a mighty windstorm hit the mountain. It was such a terrible blast that the rocks were torn loose, but the Lord was not in the wind. After the wind there was an earthquake, but the Lord was not in the earthquake. And after the earthquake there was a fire, but the Lord was not in the fire. And after the fire there was the sound of a gentle whisper. When Elijah heard it, he wrapped his face in his cloak and went out and stood at the entrance of the cave. And a voice said, "What are you doing here, Elijah?"

Another one of the outward spiritual practices is solitude. Foster says the purpose of silence and solitude is to be able to see and hear. Like Elijah following his great victory against the prophets of Baal, we also need to be still and silent sometimes in order to hear the gentle whisper of God, directing us on what comes next.

Prayer: God, help me to discern when to speak up and also when to be silent. Teach me how to embrace silence and solitude as an opportunity to remove distractions from listening to Your voice. Amen.

Day 13 | January 23, 2026

Psalm 46:8-11
Come and see what the Lord has done, the desolations he has brought on the earth. He makes wars cease to the ends of the earth.
He breaks the bow and shatters the spear; he burns the shields with fire.
He says, "Be still, and know that I am God;
I will be exalted among the nations, I will be exalted in the earth."
The Lord Almighty is with us; the God of Jacob is our fortress.

Simply to refrain from talking, without a heart listening to God is not silence. A day filled with noise and voices can be a day of silence, if the noises become for us the echo of the presence of God. (98)

Prayer: Lord, in the busyness of my daily life help me to be still. To pause before giving an answer. To be mindful of Your presence with me so that I can hear You and respond to Your call in the noise of life around me. I want my words to be a blessing, and to build others up according to their needs. Amen.

Day 14 | January 24, 2026

Philippians 2:2-5
[in your relationships with one another] You must have the same attitude that Christ Jesus had. Though he was God, he did not think of equality with God as something to cling to. Instead, he gave up his divine privileges; he

took the humble position of a slave and was born as a human being. When he appeared in human form, he humbled himself in obedience to God and died a criminal's death on a cross.

The discipline of submission simply means to be free to value other people and love them unconditionally. As Foster says, when we practice submission as an act of love for Jesus, we discover that it is far better to serve our neighbor than to have our own way.

Prayer: God, help me to develop the same attitude as Christ Jesus, valuing the needs of others, whether it be my family, coworkers, or friends, more than my own. Help me to surrender the need to be right or express my opinion or assert my authority, so I might better love others as You do. Amen.

Day 15 | January 25, 2026

Mark 10:42-45
Jesus called them together and said, "You know that those who are regarded as rulers of the Gentiles lord it over them, and their high officials exercise authority over them. Not so with you. Instead, whoever wants to become great among you must be your servant, and whoever wants to be first must be slave of all. For even the Son of Man did not come to be served, but to serve, and to give his life as a ransom for many."

True service builds community. In other words, my service can be self-righteous, focused on what I want to do and making myself look important. "It demands the opportunity to help, even when to do so would be destructive. True

service can listen with tenderness and patience before acting. It can serve by waiting in silence. 'They also serve who stand and wait.' (128-129)

Prayer: Lord Jesus, develop in me a servant's heart: a heart that can wait and be patient if that's what kind of service is required. Remove from me the desire to gain honor and respect from serving, but instead let me desire only Your approval, that my service would truly build up my community. Amen.

Day 16 | January 26, 2026

1 Peter 4:10
Each of you should use whatever gift you have received to serve others, as faithful stewards of God's grace in its various forms.

Prayer: Lord Jesus, open my eyes to the gifts you have given me especially to share with the body of Christ, so the Church might be more fruitful and reach more and more people with Your light, Your hope, and Your healing. Amen.

Day 17 | January 27, 2026

James 5:16
Therefore confess your sins to each other and pray for each other so that you may be healed. The prayer of a righteous person is powerful and effective.

Because of Jesus' sacrifice on the cross for our sins, Foster writes, we "have been given the authority to receive the confession of sin and to forgive it in his name." In

confessing our sins, there is freedom as we admit our need for forgiveness and accept that Jesus has forgiven us. Receiving God's forgiveness enables us also to forgive others, as Jesus taught his followers to do.(143)

Prayer: Jesus, I take a moment now to confess to you the ways I have fallen short and sinned against you. Thank you for forgiving me. Help me to forgive others when they sin against me. Amen.

Day 18 | January 28, 2026

Psalm 42:2-5 NLT
I thirst for God, the living God. When can I go and stand before him? Day and night I have only tears for food, while my enemies continually taunt me saying, "Where is this God of yours?" My heart is breaking as I remember how it used to be: I walked among the crowds of worshipers, leading a great procession to the house of God, singing for joy and giving thanks amid the sound of a great celebration!

"To worship is to experience Reality, to touch Life. It is to know, to feel, to experience the resurrected Christ in the midst of a gathered community. It is a breaking into the [glory] of God, or better yet, being invaded by the [glory] of God." (Foster 58)

Prayer: Lord Jesus, renew my longing to worship You with the gathered church. Prompt in me an expectancy to see, hear, and be transformed by Jesus while I'm attentive in worship. Unite my heart to fear Your name (Psalm 86) and unite our church through our times of worship, that Your glory would

invade our hearts and subsequently our community and world. Amen.

Day 19 | January 29, 2026

Acts 13:1-3
While they were worshiping the Lord and fasting, the Holy Spirit said, "Set apart for me Barnabas and Saul for the work to which I have called them." So after they had fasted and prayed, they placed their hands on them and sent them off.

The spiritual discipline of guidance can be experienced individually but especially these days together in community, as the church gathers to pray and worship together. Foster writes "We would be well advised to encourage groups of people to fast, pray, and worship together until they have discerned the mind of the Lord." (178)

Prayer: Lord Jesus, make us a praying Church. Increase the number of prayer groups at GSMC, and not just people who gather to discuss lists of requests and designate one person to pray, but groups where all are willing to speak to Jesus aloud, in front of each other, so that our prayers might be more powerful and effective. Amen.

Day 20 | January 30, 2026

Psalm 42:5-6 TPT
So then, my soul, why would you be depressed? Why would you sink into despair? Just keep hoping and waiting on God, your Savior. For no matter what, I will

still sing with praise, for you are my saving grace! Here I am depressed and downcast. Yet I will still remember you as I ponder the place where your glory streams down from the mighty mountaintops, lofty and majestic–the mountains of your awesome presence.

Foster writes, "Celebration brings joy into life, and joy makes us strong...Joy is part of the fruit of the Spirit (Gal.5:22) and is kind of like the motor, the thing that keeps everything going..Joy produces energy. Joy makes us strong." This can be especially critical when we go through hard seasons, like the Psalmist describes above. It is important to keep celebrating God with His people, because in every season, "He's where the joy is!" (TLC, The Bible Recap ©2025)

Prayer: Lord Jesus, you are truly where the joy is. Let me not neglect to celebrate Your goodness and your faithfulness in every season. Let the joy of the Lord truly be my strength each and every day of my life. Amen.

Day 21 | January 31, 2026

Philippians 4:4
Rejoice in the Lord always. I will say it again: Rejoice!
Augustine of Hippo famously said, "The Christian should be an alleluia from head to foot!" (190)

Prayer: Lord, as I finish this 21 Days of Prayer and Fasting, let the joy of the Lord continue to be my strength day in and day out, through every season. Let my love for you grow as I practice disciplines like prayer, fasting, silence, study, and worship. Show me how to practice service to others and let me

daily confess my sins to you as well as those I sin against. I want to grow deeper in my relationship with Christ, so that the gospel can spread further and wider because of me and this Church. I invite you in 2026 to be my joy and my strength more and more each day. Amen.

All quotations and references are taken from Richard Foster's classic Celebration of Discipline* Foster, Richard J. Celebration of Discipline: The Path to Spiritual Growth. 20th anniversary ed. San Francisco: HarperSanFrancisco, 1998.