



ANTIOCH

antiochdallas.org

21 DAYS
PRAYER & FASTING



COME TO ME.

- Jesus





PARTICIPATION GUIDE

As we begin 2024, our church family will take 21 days to seek God afresh through prayer and fasting.

Why prayer and fasting?

Jesus modeled a life of prayer and fasting for His disciples to follow. When we fast we lay aside something we normally consume, like food or media, to rely more fully on God. Our church has experienced God do amazing things in and through us each year we've committed to 21 days of prayer and fasting.

Why 21 days?

We have found 3 weeks to be a good amount of time for people to lay things aside and draw near to God. It also allows for our church to pray and fast together in Lifegroups and on Sundays in a meaningful way.

What about this year?

In praying for 2024, the words of Jesus saying “*Come to me*” were highlighted as a first step for us to take in walking with Jesus together this year. For the 21 days of prayer and fasting, we will be re-focusing on coming to Jesus both individually and collectively. Let's take hold of Jesus' invitation again to “Come to me, all you who are weary and burdened” to find rest for our souls, take up his yoke, and walk with him.

Practically, the 21 days will begin on Monday, January 15th, and go through Sunday, February 4th. We are praying God would use this guide to bless you and help us all walk with Jesus together in 2024!

Love,

Joe Paolino, on behalf of the church overseer team and staff





Come to me.

MATTHEW 11:28-30

In Matthew 11:28-30, Jesus gives this bold invitation for all the weary and burdened: **“Come to me.”**

28 *“Come to me, all you who are weary and burdened, and I will give you rest. 29 Take my yoke upon you and learn from me, for I am gentle and humble in heart, and you will find rest for your souls. 30 For my yoke is easy and my burden is light.”*

This is stunning. Jesus didn’t point outside of himself to someone or something to give us rest. Jesus pointed to himself as the source and solution for all – **“Come to me”** and **“I will give you rest”**.

Take my yoke upon you and learn from me

A yoke is a wooden crosspiece fastened over the necks of two animals and attached to a plow or cart for pulling.

It is a metaphor for coming under submission to someone or something else, like a younger ox being paired with an older ox.

Jesus rebuked the Pharisees for putting a yoke on the people too heavy for them to bear. They were demanding people obey God’s law plus additional rules. Instead of helping lift people’s loads, they were adding on to it. This is the “yoke of religious performance.”

Jesus also called people to leave behind the “yokes of this world” and follow him. What good is it to labor and gain the world, but lose your soul in the process? Jesus said “Come to me” and he will teach us to find rest for our souls by taking up his yoke.

A few examples of the yokes of this world:

- Comparison - I’m better than/worse than so and so...
- Control - if I plan it right and people listen...
- Cynicism - I can only trust myself...
- Consumerism - what is in it for me...
- Distraction - phone, social media, tv, buying things ...
- Fear of people - what will they think...
- Perfectionism - it should’ve been better...
- Pride - my voice/opinion matter most...
- Shame - I am messed up...
- Status - I’ll be satisfied when I...
- Success - when I achieve this then...



REST FOR YOUR SOULS

The yokes of the world and religious performance promise us meaning and satisfaction for our souls – but end up all being yokes which say **“never enough.”**

Jesus is offering us an exchange– take his yoke upon you and learn from him. In his grace, he says **“I am enough.”** It is finished on the cross. Now come to me and I will teach you how to walk with me.

The rest Jesus offers is a *“rest for our souls”*. We can be physically or mentally weary, while still having rest for our souls. This does not mean we will have a life free of hardship, stress, or trials. Jesus told his disciples the opposite. *“In this world you will have trouble. But take heart! I have overcome the world.”* (Jn 16.33). Let us not mistake a light burden and easy yoke for a comfortable life. Rest for our souls gives us meaning, satisfaction, and security beyond our circumstances and a home in Jesus.

“Our hearts are restless until we find our rest in Thee.” -St. Augustine

WAY OF THE WORLD

Comparison
Control
Cynicism
Consumerism
Distraction
Fear of people
Perfectionism
Pride
Shame
Status
Success

WAY OF JESUS

Honor
Faith
Joy
Contentment
Presence
Fear of God
Grace
Humility
Sought After
Sonship
Service





HOW ARE WE FASTING?

We are fasting in these three ways: media, food, and spending.

Weeks 1-3: Media // We are encouraging everyone to fast from all non-essential media (TV, social media, etc.) during the entire 21 days of prayer and fasting.

Week 2: Food // We are encouraging everyone to fast from food in some way during week 2.

Week 3: Spending // We are encouraging everyone to fast from non-essential spending (shopping, eating out, etc.) in week 3.

NOTE: We realize that shutting off all media and fasting from food may not be possible for everyone depending on unique circumstances with health, work, school, family, etc. That being said, we want to challenge everyone to jump in as much as possible. With media, don't ignore the email from your boss or teacher but turn your phone off from the evening scroll and put aside your favorite show or sports team. With food, take a step of faith to fast a meal, a day, multiple days, or the whole week as you feel led by the Lord. With spending, give thanks to God for what you have, eat meals at home, make your own lunch, brew your own coffee, unsubscribe, give to others in need as the Lord leads.

HOW ARE WE PRAYING?

ENGAGE

To help guide our prayers we've organized a few practical steps and tools. We encourage everyone to:

ENGAGE PERSONALLY:

Morning Prayer: "Jesus, I come to you with my burden of _____. I receive your light and easy yoke and commit to walk with you today.

Evening Prayer: Prayer of Examen (pg 16)

ENGAGE COMMUNALLY:

Pray for one another in Lifegroups. "What burden or breakthrough are you coming to Jesus with?"

Pray for one another on Sunday Mornings.

ENGAGE WITH YOUR FAMILY:

Weeks 1-3: Media // Invite the kids to be a part. Tell them we are fasting from watching shows and screen time for the next 3 weeks as a church to focus on God and trust Him more.



HOW ARE WE PRAYING?

(continued)

- Lead them to participate at the level they're able to engage (full week, most of the week, afternoons, etc.).
- Pray for them! Ask, how can I be praying for you?
- Ask them to pray for you! WE are praying for _____.

Week 2: Food // While we don't recommend your growing children participate in a fast from food, below are a couple of ideas to engage as a family.

- Pray about a type of food to give up for that week.
- Make homeless care bags to distribute or donate at Austin Street Center.

Week 3: Spending // This is a great time to highlight generosity towards others.

- Invite them to give some of their own money/coins to someone else? Or perhaps they'd like to gather toys to give away to others/charity?
- Ask them to pray for your family that you would always trust God to provide in every way.

GETTING STARTED: "COME TO ME" EXERCISE

On this page, you will find reflection questions to help you "come to Jesus" and "take up his yoke to learn from Him".

REFLECTION QUESTIONS

STEP 1: "Come to me"

Has there been anything hindering me from coming to Jesus? If so, what is it?

Examples: Distractions (phone, entertainment, sports, etc.), Stress, Weariness, Disappointment, etc.

STEP 2: "all who are weary and burdened"

What are the "burdens" or "yokes of this world" I'm coming to Jesus with? (See pg. 6 for examples)

Holy Spirit, what are the main burdens you are highlighting for me to bring to you this fast?



“COME TO ME” EXERCISE

STEP 3: Share

Who could I ask to be praying alongside me during these next 21 days? Who can I be praying for in my Lifegroup?

Note: If you're hesitant to share something very personal, we understand and respect that. At the same time, it's in places of vulnerability and humility where we see God's grace poured out.

STEP 4: Plan

Decide when you will pray and anything else you want to pray for in the fast.

Example: Morning at 6am in my chair with coffee/tea. Evening in my room with a journal before I go to sleep.





DAILY PRAYER RHYTHMS

Morning

We are going to use the P.R.A.Y. acronym to come to Jesus in the morning.

P = Pause. As you start your time of prayer, begin by pausing and being still before the Lord.

R = Read. Read the passage of the day slowly and be sensitive to the words or phrases that the Holy Spirit is highlighting to you as you read.

A = Ask. Ask God to come and speak to you. Open up your heart to Him as your heavenly Father.

Y = Yield. We want to yield our lives to the words we have prayed and commit to follow Jesus's way.

“Jesus, I come to you with my burden of _____. I receive your light and easy yoke and commit to walk with you today.”



Evening | Prayer of Examen

We are going to use the prayer of examen to come to Jesus in the evening.

The Examen prayer was made popular by Ignatius of Loyola (1491 – 1556). It has helped Christians for centuries to re-center themselves on Jesus as they come to the end of long days. We are using a variation created by Pete Greig from his book, *How to Pray*, to help us come to Jesus at the close of our days.

Replay = Replay your day. What made you happy or joyful? What made you anxious or burdened?

Rejoice = Give thanks to God for the small and the significant things from the day.

Repent = Ask God for forgiveness where you need. Receive His forgiveness afresh.

Reboot = Commit to walk with Jesus tomorrow. Ask for grace to see His presence more clearly.



DAY ONE

Pause. Breathe deeply. Be still. Turn your attention to God's presence.

Read. Matthew 11:28-30 "Come to me, all you who are weary and burdened, and I will give you rest. Take my yoke upon you and learn from me, for I am gentle and humble in heart, and you will find rest for your souls. For my yoke is easy and my burden is light."

Ask. Has there been anything hindering me from coming to you? What are the burdens or heavy yokes I'm carrying?

Yield. Jesus, I come to you with my burden of _____. I receive your light and easy yoke and commit to walk with you today.

DAY TWO

Pause. Breathe deeply. Be still. Turn your attention to God's presence.

Read. Hebrews 4:15-16 For we do not have a high priest who is unable to sympathize with our weaknesses, but one who in every respect has been tempted as we are, yet without sin. Let us then with confidence draw near to the throne of grace, that we may receive mercy and find grace to help in time of need.

Ask: Holy Spirit, what are you highlighting to me in this passage?

Yield: Jesus, I come to you with my burden of _____. I receive your light and easy yoke and commit to walk with you today.



DAY THREE

Pause. Breathe deeply. Be still. Turn your attention to God's presence.

Read. John 7:37-39 On the last and greatest day of the festival, Jesus stood and said in a loud voice, "Let anyone who is thirsty come to me and drink. Whoever believes in me, as Scripture has said, rivers of living water will flow from within them." By this he meant the Spirit, whom those who believed in him were later to receive

Ask: Father, thank you for the gift of the Holy Spirit. How can I be more aware of the Spirit flowing in me?

Yield: Jesus, I come to you with my burden of _____. I receive your light and easy yoke and commit to walk with you today.



DAY FOUR

Pause. Breathe deeply. Be still. Turn your attention to God's presence.

Read. John 6:37 "All those the Father gives me will come to me, and whoever comes to me I will never drive away."

Ask: Jesus, thank you for never turning away those who come to you. What else does this show me about your character?

Yield: Jesus, I come to you with my burden of _____. I receive your light and easy yoke and commit to walk with you today.



DAY FIVE

Pause. Breathe deeply. Be still. Turn your attention to God's presence.

Read. John 10:9-10 "I am the gate; whoever enters through me will be saved. They will come in and go out, and find pasture. The thief comes only to steal and kill and destroy; I have come that they may have life, and have it to the full."

Ask: Jesus, thank you for coming to give us abundant life as the Good Shepherd. What are the schemes of the thief I'm not seeing right now?

Yield: Jesus, I come to you with my burden of _____. I receive your light and easy yoke and commit to walk with you today.



DAY SIX

Pause. Breathe deeply. Be still. Turn your attention to God's presence.

Read. John 14:6 Jesus said to him, "I am the way, and the truth, and the life. No one comes to the Father except through me."

Ask: Holy Spirit, what are you speaking to me through this Scripture today?

Yield: Jesus, I come to you with my burden of _____. I receive your light and easy yoke and commit to walk with you today.



DAY SEVEN

Pause. Breathe deeply. Be still. Turn your attention to God’s presence.

Read. Matthew 11:28-30 “Come to me, all you who are weary and burdened, and I will give you rest. Take my yoke upon you and learn from me, for I am gentle and humble in heart, and you will find rest for your souls. For my yoke is easy and my burden is light.”

Ask: Jesus, help me find rest for my soul. What yoke of the world do I need to lay down?

Yield: Jesus, I come to you with my burden of _____. I receive your light and easy yoke and commit to walk with you today.



DAY EIGHT

Pause. Breathe deeply. Be still. Turn your attention to God’s presence.

Read. Luke 10:40-42 But Martha was distracted by all the preparations that had to be made. She came to him and asked, “Lord, don’t you care that my sister has left me to do the work by myself? Tell her to help me!” “Martha, Martha,” the Lord answered, “you are worried and upset about many things, but few things are needed—or indeed only one. Mary has chosen what is better, and it will not be taken away from her.”

Ask: How do I work diligently (like Martha) while not being distracted from your presence (like Mary)?

Yield: Jesus, I come to you with my burden of _____. I receive your light and easy yoke and commit to walk with you today.



DAY NINE

Pause. Breathe deeply. Be still. Turn your attention to God's presence.

Read. Galatians 5:1-2 It is for freedom that Christ has set us free. Stand firm, then, and do not let yourselves be burdened again by a yoke of slavery.

Ask: Holy Spirit, how can I receive more of the love and freedom Christ has given me? Where am I tempted to be burdened again by a yoke of slavery?

Yield: Jesus, I come to you with my burden of _____. I receive your light and easy yoke and commit to walk with you today.



DAY TEN

Pause. Breathe deeply. Be still. Turn your attention to God's presence.

Read. Galatians 5:13-14 You, my brothers and sisters, were called to be free. But do not use your freedom to indulge the flesh; rather, serve one another humbly in love. For the entire law is fulfilled in keeping this one command: "Love your neighbor as yourself."

Ask: Holy Spirit, where I focused on serving myself instead of serving others humbly in love? How can I love my neighbor as myself today?

Yield: Jesus, I come to you with my burden of _____. I receive your light and easy yoke and commit to walk with you today.



DAY ELEVEN

Pause. Breathe deeply. Be still. Turn your attention to God's presence.

Read. Galatians 5:16,22-23 But I say, walk by the Spirit, and you will not gratify the desires of the flesh...But the fruit of the Spirit is love, joy, peace, patience, kindness, goodness, faithfulness, gentleness, self-control; against such things there is no law.

Ask: What fruit of the Spirit are you highlighting for me to walk in more?

Yield: Jesus, I come to you with my burden of _____. I receive your light and easy yoke and commit to walk with you today.



DAY TWELVE

Pause. Breathe deeply. Be still. Turn your attention to God's presence.

Read. Colossians 2:6-7 Therefore, as you received Christ Jesus the Lord, so walk in him, rooted and built up in him and established in the faith, just as you were taught, abounding in thanksgiving.

Ask: What are 5 things to give thanks to God for today? Lord, help me to abound in thanksgiving.

Yield: Jesus, I come to you with my burden of _____. I receive your light and easy yoke and commit to walk with you today.



DAY THIRTEEN

Pause. Breathe deeply. Be still. Turn your attention to God's presence.

Read. Luke 18:16-17 But Jesus called the children to him and said, "Let the little children come to me, and do not hinder them, for the kingdom of God belongs to such as these. Truly I tell you, anyone who will not receive the kingdom of God like a little child will never enter it."

Ask: Lord, how can I help and not hinder children coming to you? Where do I need to become more like a child?

Yield: Jesus, I come to you with my burden of _____. I receive your light and easy yoke and commit to walk with you today.



DAY FOURTEEN

Pause. Breathe deeply. Be still. Turn your attention to God's presence.

Read. Matthew 11:28-30 "Come to me, all you who are weary and burdened, and I will give you rest. Take my yoke upon you and learn from me, for I am gentle and humble in heart, and you will find rest for your souls. For my yoke is easy and my burden is light."

Ask: Who is someone else I can pray for today to come to you?

Yield: Jesus, I come to you with my burden of _____. I receive your light and easy yoke and commit to walk with you today.



DAY FIFTEEN

Pause. Breathe deeply. Be still. Turn your attention to God's presence.

Read. Matthew 4:18-20 As Jesus was walking beside the Sea of Galilee, he saw two brothers, Simon called Peter and his brother Andrew. They were casting a net into the lake, for they were fishermen. "Come, follow me," Jesus said, "and I will send you out to fish for people." At once they left their nets and followed him.

Ask: What are the "nets" you're asking me to drop? Who are the people you are giving me a heart for right now?

Yield: Jesus, I come to you with my burden of _____. I receive your light and easy yoke and commit to walk with you today.



DAY SIXTEEN

Pause. Breathe deeply. Be still. Turn your attention to God's presence.

Read. Isaiah 55:1-2 "Come, all you who are thirsty, come to the waters; and you who have no money, come, buy and eat! Come, buy wine and milk without money and without cost. Why spend money on what is not bread, and your labor on what does not satisfy? Listen, listen to me, and eat what is good, and you will delight in the richest of fare."

Ask: God, what are things I'm worried about that don't truly matter?

Yield: Jesus, I come to you with my burden of _____. I receive your light and easy yoke and commit to walk with you today.



DAY SEVENTEEN

Pause. Breathe deeply. Be still. Turn your attention to God's presence.

Read. Matthew 13:44 "The kingdom of heaven is like treasure hidden in a field. When a man found it, he hid it again, and then in his joy went and sold all he had and bought that field."

Ask: Lord, help me to see the treasure hidden in the field. Is there anything I'm valuing more than you and your kingdom?

Yield: Jesus, I come to you with my burden of _____. I receive your light and easy yoke and commit to walk with you today.



DAY EIGHTEEN

Pause. Breathe deeply. Be still. Turn your attention to God's presence.

Read. Matthew 16:24-25 Then Jesus said to his disciples, "Whoever wants to be my disciple must deny themselves and take up their cross and follow me. For whoever wants to save their life will lose it, but whoever loses their life for me will find it. What good will it be for someone to gain the whole world, yet forfeit their soul?"

Ask: Holy Spirit, what do you want me to know from this passage today?

Yield: Jesus, I come to you with my burden of _____. I receive your light and easy yoke and commit to walk with you today.



DAY NINETEEN

Pause. Breathe deeply. Be still. Turn your attention to God's presence.

Read. 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."

Ask: Thank you for always being with me. Is there a person you are highlighting for me to pray for and move towards?

Yield: Jesus, I come to you with my burden of _____. I receive your light and easy yoke and commit to walk with you today.



DAY TWENTY

Pause. Breathe deeply. Be still. Turn your attention to God's presence.

Read. Psalms 25:4-5 Show me your ways, Lord, teach me your paths. Guide me in your truth and teach me, for you are God my Savior, and my hope is in you all day long.

Ask: Where do I need wisdom today? Guide me as I hope in you all day long.

Yield: Jesus, I come to you with my burden of _____. I receive your light and easy yoke and commit to walk with you today.



DAY TWENTY-ONE

Pause. Breathe deeply. Be still. Turn your attention to God’s presence.

Read. Matthew 11:28-30 “Come to me, all you who are weary and burdened, and I will give you rest. Take my yoke upon you and learn from me, for I am gentle and humble in heart, and you will find rest for your souls. For my yoke is easy and my burden is light.”

Ask: Jesus, thank you for being gentle and humble of heart. What do you want me to know today?

Yield: Jesus, I come to you with my burden of _____. I receive your light and easy yoke and commit to walk with you today.

PRAYER JOURNAL
