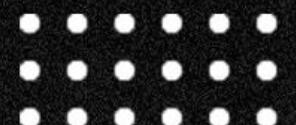




25 - 29 September

# 5 DAYS

**PRAYER AND FASTING**



## September Fasting Guide

Thanks for taking time to read this guide! We will be for the next 5 days taking some time apart to pray and fast together. For over a thousand years, fasting was one of the central practices of the Way of Jesus. It was common practice for apprentices of Jesus to fast twice a week until sundown — on Wednesdays and Fridays. Fasting was simply one of the things that practicing Christians did. Its not about legalism or ritualism. Its about us as believers growing more like Jesus, going deeper in our faith and being able to stand together in agreement because we all have be led by the Lord.

Now this fasting time is nice and short which is a great opportunity to practise the discipline of fasting. Spiritual formation is slow, deep, cumulative work that takes years, not weeks. The goal of this 5 days experience is just to get you started on a journey of a lifetime. This is also the time of the year in which the Jewish calendar has the day of atonement. We aren't Jews and that's why we are not doing the 25hour fast like they do. But rather we take this time to reflect on the reality the feast represents.

For over a thousand years, fasting was one of the central practices of the Way of Jesus. It was common practice for apprentices of Jesus to fast twice a week until sundown — on Wednesdays and Fridays. However, in our context rather than weekly we tend to fast in blocks throughout the year.

It's a great chance to look at our lives and be thankful for the atonement we have in Jesus, but also to see the difference he had made in our lives and the changes that have come with accepting him as Lord and saviour. But also to look forward. Many speculate it will be at trumpets which is all about the return of the Messiah and the arrival of the king that Jesus will be returning. We don't play on this speculation as Jesus says himself only the father knows. But there are merits to the point and it's a great time in this feast to look forward to the future return of Jesus. Reminding ourselves that this is the purpose in which we are running towards in this life. As it says in 2 Corinthians *"run in such a way to achieve the prize"*. This prize Paul speaks of is eternal life.

So this time is a great moment of reflection backwards and forwards. But there is even more to this time. With this fasting time ending at the feast of tabernacles where we gather to celebrate Gods guidance of his people and that we are pilgrims in this world. There's also a great chance in this fasting time to pray and fast for the unbelieving Jews in this world and the salvation of

all people. Particularly focused on the city we live in Antwerp. That we can see breakthrough in the Jewish quarter, see Jews here come to faith. But also people from every nation. To pray for the leadership and our neighbours.

Also if we look back in church history. Looking to the church fathers and apostles and other writers. We can see consistently through them all there is this quality of which they give to all believers that they have the capacity to hear from God. It might be different for us all in this season. But I truly believe in these 5 days you can hear from God. Grow in your relationship with him and go deeper in your faith.

So we take this next 5 days to pray into these things. But then to break the fast together with a church table together! I hope you will have a great time seeking the Lord.

## Day 1

Today it's the day of atonement. Its all about deliverance and salvation. That Jesus is the one who came to save us. For the Jews this is end of a 10-day run up from trumpets in which it is called the days of awe. Jewish tradition says that Jews believe that the messiah would return at the feast of trumpets, but it is only on the Day of Atonement their fates would be sealed in eternal life or death. They would have 10 days to repent and ensure that they were saved. Now we don't affirm this tradition but it's a nice insight into their thinking as they celebrate the day of atonement. It's the day of eternal judgement. But also the day of the new beginning and for us its like Judgement da but then leading into the beginning of the new creation.

It was also the only day in the Old Testament that the high priest could enter the holy of holies. So we also have this reminder ourselves that Jesus as our high priest who each and every day who speaks to the father on our behalf. But for them it was a once a ear reset of the sacrificial system, bringing them back to the state of holiness from which they were when God gave them to Israel and of all the peoples unintentional or unknown sins that they would be as clean as when the accepted covenant. It was all above resetting back to zero.

So since we have this atonement and high priest in Jesus we can stand with confidence in our salvation. We don't have to be second guessing or waiting for 10 days to ensure we are all good. But rather lets take this day to be thankful for what we have and what Jesus has done for us but also look to his return and in 1 Cor 3:12-15<sup>1</sup> and Revelation 20:11–15<sup>2</sup> we see that he will come back for his servants and judge them according to their deeds so for the sake of salvation but to reveal the value of their works to the kingdom and give a due reward.

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<sup>1</sup> Now if anyone builds on the foundation with gold, silver, precious stones, wood, hay, straw—<sup>13</sup> each one's work will become manifest, for the Day will disclose it, because it will be revealed by fire, and the fire will test what sort of work each one has done. <sup>14</sup> If the work that anyone has built on the foundation survives, he will receive a reward. <sup>15</sup> If anyone's work is burned up, he will suffer loss, though he himself will be saved, but only as through fire. 1 Cor 3:12-15 ESV

<sup>2</sup> <sup>11</sup> Then I saw a great white throne and him who was seated on it. From his presence earth and sky fled away, and no place was found for them. <sup>12</sup> And I saw the dead, great and small, standing before the throne, and books were opened. Then another book was opened, which is the book of life. And the dead were judged by what was written in the books, according to what they had done. <sup>13</sup> And the sea gave up the dead who were in it, Death and Hades gave up the dead who were in them, and they were judged, each one of them, according to what they had done. <sup>14</sup> Then Death and Hades were thrown into the lake of fire. This is the second death, the lake of fire. <sup>15</sup> And if anyone's name was not found written in the book of life, he was thrown into the lake of fire. Revelation 20:11–15

It's a great time to reflect on our lives and ask the lord to search our hearts for refinement. That we can become more like him. Increasing in our deeds for the kingdom because we live to please him. We know that if we stand firm in him we will receive the reward of eternal life! His blood covers our sins! We just need to bring them to him in repentance.

## Day 2

Today let us now begin to look outward. We stand with a high priest but let's take today to pray for the nations, for all of those who do not have Jesus as their salvation and high priest. That the Lord would reveal himself to them, but also that believers would arise to fill in the gap for them and go and share with them the gospel.

Throughout revelation we see this comparison of the old testament picture and its fulfillment with all the nations; a great example of this is in revelation 7 where John sees the 144,000, 12,000 from each tribe and then John turns and see the great multitude described *"After this I looked, and behold, a great multitude that no one could number, from every nation, from all tribes and peoples and languages, standing before the throne and before the Lamb, clothed in white robes, with palm branches in their hands..."*<sup>3</sup>

We see this clear contrast of how in Jesus the people God are fulfilled as this mixed multitude. It's Jew and gentile together. We need both. We need to have a heart for both Jew and Gentiles, to see we reach both. In Romans it speaks of the Jews being blind <sup>25</sup> *Lest you be wise in your own sight, I do not want you to be unaware of this mystery, brothers: a partial hardening has come upon Israel, until the fullness of the Gentiles has come in.*<sup>4</sup>

It is also a great time to be thankful for the Jews and the root from which the gospel comes from that God used them so that we could partake in his kingdom. But in turn we should long for their salvation, Romans 11 is all about Israel being the root of our faith and we should acknowledge that and pray for the salvation of God's original covenant people. As we pray today let's pray for the fullness of the gentiles that the gospel can be effective in reaching the nations but also for the awakening of the Jews that they can come back to the fold.

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<sup>3</sup> Revelation 7:9

<sup>4</sup> Romans 11:25 (ESV)

## Day 3

Today lets shift our focus back to our local context. We are a church based in Antwerp, we are called to reach the city of Antwerp but this can include its surrounding areas. There was this saying which was repeated a lot when I was growing up “the local church is the hope for the nations”. The church in Antwerp is the only thing which can effectively display and proclaim the hope of the world to the people of Antwerp. Its our job as lighthouse but also the other churches around.

This is why its essential that we as “the church” in Antwerp work together and reach the city in unity. Each church has its strengths and ability to reach different people groups. We need people who have a heart for the homeless as well as the rich as well as the Belgians and foreigners. We see Paul emphasise this in Col 1:27 *27 To them God chose to make known how great among the Gentiles are the riches of the glory of this mystery, which is Christ in you, the hope of glory.* Christ in you is the hope of Glory. We have the hope of glory, its in us and all the local believers in Antwerp are the ones who get to proclaim that to the city.

Secondly, Lets also pray for breakthrough in our city. Praying for our mayor and the city government. Paul says this to timothy: *“First of all, then, I urge that supplications, prayers, intercessions, and thanksgivings be made for all people, 2 for kings and all who are in high positions, that we may lead a peaceful and quiet life, godly and dignified in every way.”*<sup>5</sup>

That we wish them to not be against us unnecessarily. We don’t want to provoke the authorities against us, we can pray for the removal of the anti-church legislation and that we can continue to be the church effectively and openly. We also want them to hear the gospel and to see the gospel manifest in all areas of the city and authorities. Likewise for the police and judges and politicians.

So today we pray for the church in Antwerp, for unity and provision and for us to be effective and for God to open doors to help us all reach the city. But also for the authorities and government and that they will have a change of heart and that we can see a shift away from an anti-church or religion agenda. So we can proclaim the gospel to everyone.

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<sup>5</sup> 1 Timothy 2:1–2 (ESV)

## Day 4

With today being the last full day of the fast lets look forward and pray about what does God want to do in our lives in the next season. What is he up to lean into God and hear from him. Throughout church history it has been spoken, implied or accepted that all believers can hear from God for themselves. Each one in different degrees. But during a time of prayer and fasting which is meant to draw us closer to the Lord is a great time to practise this. A few things we can pray for is that our hearts can align with his, that he will put a conviction or passion on our hearts. That If we don't know already, "Lord what is my next step?" "What do you want me to do." Etc.

Its also a great time to note down, what are the kingdom dreams and visions that you have. Then to pray over them asking the Lord to give direction over them. The Lord has given each one of us a ministry and giftings to be able to accomplish this. But the most important thing is that we can identify what that ministry is and seek to fulfil it. As Paul writes to timothy saying *"As for you, always be sober-minded, endure suffering, do the work of an evangelist, fulfill your ministry."*<sup>6</sup>

Paul also says earlier on in his letter to timothy that we should stand strong and live out these gifting and ministry. As we can read.

*"<sup>6</sup> For this reason I remind you to fan into flame the gift of God, which is in you through the laying on of my hands, <sup>7</sup> for God gave us a spirit not of fear but of power and love and self-control."*<sup>7</sup>

So today's let's pray for hearing from the Lord for ourselves and others in the church. But also that we can live out our calling and ministry and take steps towards doing so.

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<sup>6</sup> 2 Timothy 4:5 (ESV)

<sup>7</sup> 2 Timothy 1:6–7 (ESV)



## Day 5

For the last day let's look for healing and restoration and reconciliation of relationships. As we close this Fast with a church today together, the table is all about the unity and bringing people together.

As Christians the first area of restoration should be our relationships. Through Jesus he restored our relationship with the Father. He then says when he summarieises the Law, <sup>29</sup> *Jesus answered, "The most important is, 'Hear, O Israel: The Lord our God, the Lord is one. <sup>30</sup> And you shall love the Lord your God with all your heart and with all your soul and with all your mind and with all your strength.' <sup>31</sup> The second is this: 'You shall love your neighbor as yourself.' There is no other commandment greater than these."*<sup>8</sup>

We see clearly the two parts the Law is all about the relationship between man and God and man with man. Jesus fulfils this too. In him we have our God relationship restored, but this should impact our relationships with others. This is also seen in the word peace. Peace can be defined as "right relationship". Having the right relationship with God and others. In right relationships we speak truth, we have honesty and integrity. We treat others right and give them the honour and respect they deserve in Gods eyes. We treat others as God would and we would want them to treat us.

So today lets take the time to pray for all of our relationships, those which are good that they will remain so, those which aren't in a good condition that as we do our part and treat others right, that they in turn would do so back, that we will see the reconciliation with others. Of course, this does not deny or remove consequences of others actions. That the Lord would be our defender and he will be the one to hold others to account. We give grace but also must act justly. Also to pray for others who need reconciliation of relationships and those which have lost relationships especially for the sake of their faith.

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<sup>8</sup> Mark 12:29-31

## To Close

Thank you for following this guide! I hope you were able to benefit from it! I hope that you will find your next time of prayer and fasting even more beneficial too.

There's no "right" length, as fasting is never once commanded by Jesus or required by the New Testament writers. But many have found that a one-time or infrequent longer fast (of a week or 21 days) can be a before/after moment in one's spiritual journey. The key is to only do this if you sense the Spirit's invitation. Do not practice this out of idealism, spiritual heroism, or a misplaced desire for weight loss or a spiritual high.

These practises aren't always easy but they are a great way to take us deeper in our faith and in relationship with God. You may find in the future God calls you to fast for specific or personal reasons that he puts on your heart. As his people we know that fasting is just part of the journey. And to close I Pray for you that as Paul wrote in 1 Thess 5: 23-24.

*<sup>23</sup> Now may the God of peace himself sanctify you completely, and may your whole spirit and soul and body be kept blameless at the coming of our Lord Jesus Christ. <sup>24</sup> He who calls you is faithful; he will surely do it.*

If you have any feedback or thoughts please do feel free to reach out to one of the pastors and deacons to talk about it and you can also contact us at [info@lighthosueantwerpen.be](mailto:info@lighthosueantwerpen.be). Blessings from the Lighthouse Team.