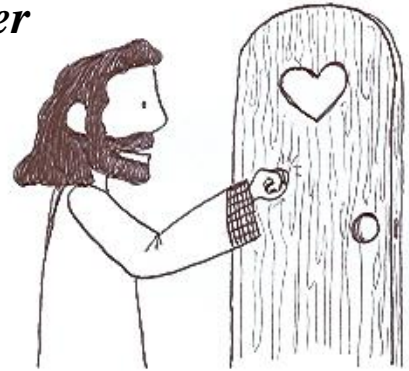


## Intimacy with the Lord

### Part I – Fasting and Prayer

*“Behold I stand at the door and knock;  
If anyone hears my voice and opens the door,  
I will come in and dine with him, and he with me.”*

Jesus – Revelation 3:20



#### ***The Most Important Invitation of your Life!***

*You are invited to spend private, quality time with God Himself!  
Our answer to this invitation will change our lives forever...*

***Q - Is it enough to pray and read the Bible only when in public church services?***

**NO!**

More than a religion, Christianity is a *personal relationship with Jesus Christ*. God wants so much more than mechanical religious activity. He invites us to enjoy an intimate, transparent and ever-deepening relationship with the Holy Spirit. We can know God – just like we know any other person!

***Q - Think of an important relationship in your life – (it could be a friend, a relative..etc.)  
How did you grow to become acquainted with that person? How did trust and intimacy grow between you?***

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***Our Goal: Learn to spend regular, private time in communion with God!***

- *How to plan such times?*
- *What to say in prayer?*
- *The importance and nature of fasting*

## Make an Appointment with God!

*Pray and read the Bible every day!*

We impoverish ourselves spiritually if we limit our contact with the Lord to formal church services. Jesus stands at the door of our lives, knocking. How will we answer?



### *What goes into an “appointment with God”?*

1. **Solitude** – Set aside time in a quiet place without distractions.
2. **Prayer** – Simply talk with God – sharing our thoughts, pains, joys and desires.
3. **Bible Reading** – When we read scripture, we listen to God in our hearts.

### *Moses used a “Tent of Meeting”*

#### *Tent of Meeting: A Mobile Temple for Worship apart from the camp*

Moses enjoyed a personal, intimate and transparent relationship with the Lord in a special place, called the “Tent of Meeting.”



*“Now Moses used to take a tent and pitch it outside the camp some distance away, calling it the “tent of meeting.” Anyone inquiring of the Lord would go to the tent of meeting outside the camp. And whenever Moses went out to the tent.... The pillar of cloud would come down and stay at the entrance, while the Lord spoke with Moses. ... the Lord would speak to Moses face to face, as a man speaks with his friend...” Ex. 33:7-10 (partial)*

What a delight to share such daily intimacy with the creator of the universe! Moses set aside this special place to be alone with His God, apart from the hustle and bustle of the camp. He went to this place regularly, and the Holy Spirit never failed to descend in the form of a cloud to commune with him.

### *We can make our own “Tent of Meeting”*

In the new covenant, by virtue of the blood of Jesus, we also can talk with *God face to face!* He invites us to such intimacy. Jesus stands at the door of our lives, knocking and waiting. It is up to us to respond by opening the door of our lives to dine with him in our own personal “Tent of Meeting.” It could be...

- *A Special Table* in the kitchen, early in the morning as the sun shines in
- *An empty meeting room* in our work place where we go during our “break”
- *A park* where we stop the car for a while on our way home from work.
- *Our bedroom*, before going to bed at night (but not lying in the bed itself!)

## First Step: Plan it!

### *Designate a set time of day – using a calendar date-book!*

When we make an appointment with someone, we agree to two important things:

1. *The time*
2. *The place*

In our hurried society of many demands frenetic activity, *if we do not set an appointment in our calendar book, it most likely will not take place.* Likewise in our spiritual life, the first step is to take out or date-book, our personal calendar, and set up a time and place when we will fulfill our appointment with God!

### *Start Small!*

Some Christians spend hours and hours in daily prayer, but when beginning, we do best to set small, achievable goals. We recommend starting with 15 minutes of daily prayer, and increasing in the future.

*On the “personal calendar” below, mark down a time each day when you will spend time in private prayer and Bible reading.*

<i>Monday</i>	<i>Tues.</i>	<i>Wed.</i>	<i>Thurs.</i>	<i>Fri.</i>	<i>Sat.</i>	<i>Sun.</i>
(morning)						
(afternoon)						
(evening)						

*If we don't plan it, we won't do it!!*

## ***Designate a private place, without distractions.***



*Turn the cell phone off!*

We start by seeking a private place, free of interruptions, telephones, children's cries and the noise of the television.



### ***Examples from the Bible: Appointments with God***

- **Jesus** - taught the importance of going into our room, closing the door, and praying to God who sees what is done in secret (Matt 6:5-15). He himself modeled the habit of going to the Mount of Olives to pray in private. (Luke 22:39)
- **Moses** – Went regularly to his “Tent of Meeting” outside the camp-site to have encounters with God. The divine fire descended and Moses spoke with God, “*face to face, as a man speaks with his friend.*”
- **Daniel** – prayed three times a day in his room beside a window. (Daniel 6:10)
- **Peter** – was in the habit of escaping to a rooftop in the calm of twilight to pray before dinner. (Acts 10)

Regardless of the specific context, let it be a comfortable, solitary place, where we can pray without interruption. Although we should certainly pray throughout our daily activities – in the car, (in the shower, at work...etc), an appointment with God should be in a solitary place of concentration.

### ***Flee Distractions!***

- Pray in the car during rush-hour traffic!
- Pray in the shower!
- Pray in bed!
- Pray in a busy office with phones ringing!



*... but have your appointment with God in a place of quietness and concentration!!!*

### ***Find a quiet place that works for you!***

- Early in the morning in the kitchen with a cup of coffee
- At noon in an empty office while everyone else is eating lunch
- At night in the living room when the kids go to sleep

*Every life is different. Find a plan that works for you!*

So write it down in the calendar, shut off the cell phone and television, and prepare yourself for an appointment with the living God!

**Assignment:** *Do at least four “Appointments with God” and fill out the forms entitled: “My Appointments with God.”*





## Prayer – The First Element of an Appointment with God

### *Be natural!*

1. **Talk “Normally”!** Setting aside religiosity, feel free to speak openly with God, without elegant and lofty religious vocabulary.
2. **Get Comfortable** (but not too comfortable!) - One can kneel, sit, lie prostrate or pace around a room to pray. Do whatever best helps you feel alert, comfortable and focused, without falling asleep!
3. **Avoid Mindless Repetition** – Christ warned us not to use repetitive, meaningless religious jargon, as if we were repeating some sort of magic formula to invoke God’s favor.

### *What should I say when praying to God?*

**Jesus taught us to pray!** The “Our Father” is an outline of prayer topics!

Jesus provides the famous, “Our Father,” as a model for prayer, not as a formula to be repeated mindlessly. Therefore, we can glean from this model the basic topics to be addressed in prayer. Can you repeat it from memory?



### **The Our Father**

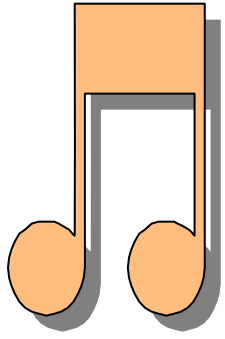
*Matthew 6:5-15*

*Our Father who art in Heaven,  
Hallowed be thy name. Thy kingdom come.  
Thy will be done, on earth as it is in heaven.  
Give us this day our daily bread,  
And forgive us our trespasses  
As we forgive those who trespass against us.  
Lead us not into temptation, but deliver us from evil,  
For thine is the kingdom and the power and the glory, forever and ever. Amen.*

### **Topics of Prayer** - (Fill out the sheet – “Topics of Prayer”)

1. **Worship**
2. **Thanksgiving**
3. **Requests for others - Intercession**
4. **Requests for one’s self**
5. **Confession**
6. **Forgive others**
7. **Spiritual warfare**

*Let’s consider these topics for prayer, one by one...*



## 1. Worship and Praise

***“Our Father, who art in heaven, hallowed be thy name.”***

What does “*hallowed*” mean? It means, “*honored, revered, respected.*” This opening phrase is a declaration of praise and worship for God’s name!



Beginning prayer by lifting our eyes in worship changes our perspective and prepares our hearts.

- *Read a Psalm of Praise*
- *Sing a worship song!*
- *Simply tell God how much you love Him!*

For example: Sing “*Amazing Grace, how sweet the sound....*”

For example: Read Psalm 136:1 out loud: “*Give thanks to God, for He is good, his loving-kindness endures forever.*”

## 2. Thanksgiving

Praise leads naturally to thanksgiving as we set aside our complaints and problems for a moment to consider God’s goodness in our lives. By so doing we train ourselves to see the “glass half full” and recognize God’s many blessings in our lives; both the “biggies” (salvation, life, etc.), as well as the “little things,” (a sunset, a good meal, etc.).



Example: *Thank you, Father, for giving me health. Thank you for saving my soul. Thank you for the delicious bagel this morning. Thank you...*

## 3. Requests for others (Intercession)

***“Thy kingdom come. Thy will be done, on earth as it is in heaven.”***

*We pray that God changes the world!*

- That the world would be a little more like “heaven”
- We pray for others
  - That God would save them
  - That God would bless them
  - That God would provide for their needs
- We pray for the nation and the needs of the world
- We pray for the salvation of our friends and family



Example: “*Father, I pray that you save my uncle. I ask that you would bless the pastor with fresh anointing to preach this Sunday. I ask that you would guide politicians in solving crises...etc.*”

#### 4. *Personal Requests*

***“Give us this day our daily bread.”***



It is not selfish to ask God to meet our needs! On the contrary, God invites us to ask for His loving care over every detail of our lives – whether emotional, material or spiritual.

Example: *“Lord, I ask that you would provide me with a good job. Please help me pay for the new tires on the car, and please heal me of this annoying cold!”*

#### 5. *Confession*

***“Forgive us our trespasses...”***

Asking for -- and giving -- forgiveness: *Good Spiritual Hygiene!*

We believe in daily confession to God! We also affirm the healing power of confessing our sins and struggles to trusted friends in Christ; (James 5:16), but the Lord’s Prayer teaches us to confess in private to God on a daily basis. We should regularly take time to examine ourselves, analyze our behavior, words, attitudes and motivations. Like brushing our teeth, the practice of daily confession in private to God provides ongoing cleansing and good “spiritual hygiene.”



Example: *Lord, please forgive me for criticizing my boss yesterday. Forgive me also for being impatient with my spouse...etc.”*

#### 6. *Forgiving others*

***“As we forgive those who trespass against us.”***

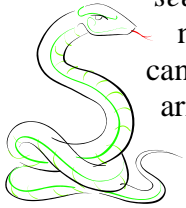
Nothing contaminates the human psyche like bitterness. Depression, illness and a variety of other emotional problems spring from unforgiveness. If we want to grow in the Lord, it is absolutely necessary that we “settle accounts” on a daily basis with those who have offended us. *If we do not forgive, God will not forgive us or accept our prayers.*

Therefore, it is necessary for us to ask ourselves daily – *Am I harboring resentment against anyone?* To forgive does not require us to pretend as if nothing bad has happened or passively to allow ourselves to be mistreated by others. It is a decision to release bitterness and resentment towards those who have wronged us.

Example: *“Lord, I forgive my boss for annoying me yesterday. I also forgive my husband for leaving his underwear on the bathroom floor – again!”*

## 7. Spiritual Warfare

***“Lead us not into temptation, but deliver us from evil.”***



Scripture teaches that our enemy, Satan, prowls around like “*roaring lion, seeking a victim to devour.*” (1 Peter 5:8) Whether we recognize it or not, we live in a context of constant spiritual warfare. Therefore, we cannot lower our guard for even a moment. Every day we must put on the armor of God (Ephesians 6) and resist Satan and his schemes.



**Example:** *“Today I declare that I am a child of God and I renounce Satan. Protect me, O Lord, from the temptation to go back to smoking cigarettes or looking inappropriately at women. I rebuke Satan and I clothe myself with the armor of God! I’m a warrior of the Lord, ready for battle today!”*

## Fasting – Praying with our Entire Body

**Definition:** *The practice of abstaining from certain foods or activities for a designated time with the purpose of seeking spiritual intimacy with God in prayer.*

Throughout the centuries Christians have practiced this discipline. When done with the correct motivations, fasting yields tremendous spiritual benefit. To avoid abuses that could possibly occur, we provide the following clarifications.

### ***Fasting is NOT...***

- To make ourselves suffer in order to earn points with God
- To manipulate God by twisting his arm
- To make ourselves feel spiritually superior to others

### ***Fasting IS...***

- A way of focusing ourselves on spiritual reality
- A way of praying with “our entire body”
- A way of subjecting the desires of our flesh
- A way of highlighting the intensity and urgency of our prayers

**Question:** *Is there a particular way in which I should fast?*

No. The state of the heart counts above all. If someone seeks God sincerely, any form of fasting can be valid in His eyes.

### ***There are many ways of fasting...***

- Abstain from food for several days
- Abstain from a particular meal
- Abstain from food, but drink juices or eat only vegetables
- Abstain from certain activities or pleasures (TV; Sports; Shopping, etc.)

*Jesus stands at the door,  
knocking,  
every day.*

*He beckons you to spend time in  
sweet intimacy with him...*

*How will you respond?*



**Assignment: Have 4 “Appointments with God”**

*Following the sheets, “My Appointment with God,” set aside time for 4 devotional experiences.*

**Assignment: Fast**

*Using the sheet, - “My Fast” – take time to fast in some way this week.*

## ***The “Our Father” – An Outline of Prayer Topics***

***Praise and Worship:***      *“Our father, who art in heaven, hallowed be thy name.”*

Father, I praise you because \_\_\_\_\_

\*\*\*\*\*

### ***Thanksgiving***

God, I thank you for \_\_\_\_\_

\*\*\*\*\*

***Requests for others – Intercession:***      *“Thy kingdom come. Thy will be done, on earth as it is in heaven.”*

Lord, I ask you to \_\_\_\_\_

\*\*\*\*\*

***Personal Requests:***      *“Give us this day our daily bread.”*

Father, I ask you for \_\_\_\_\_

\*\*\*\*\*

***Confession of Sin:***      *“Forgive us our trespasses.”*

Lord, I ask you to forgive me for \_\_\_\_\_

\*\*\*\*\*

***Forgiving others:***      *“...as we forgive those who trespass against us.”*

Lord, I forgive \_\_\_\_\_ for \_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_.

\*\*\*\*\*

***Spiritual Warfare:***      *“Lead us not into temptation, but deliver us from evil.”*

Lord, please keep me from the temptation to \_\_\_\_\_.

Name: \_\_\_\_\_

## ***My Appointment with God***

Date: \_\_\_\_\_

Time: \_\_\_\_\_

Place: \_\_\_\_\_



**Text:** Psalm 23 -- *When I meditate on this text, the Lord tells me that....*

*Prayers -- (praises, confessions, requests, etc.)*

## ***My Appointment with God***

Date: \_\_\_\_\_

Time: \_\_\_\_\_

Place: \_\_\_\_\_



**Text:** John 3 -- *When I meditate on this text, the Lord tells me that....*

*Prayers -- (praises, confessions, requests, etc.)*

Name: \_\_\_\_\_

## ***My Appointment with God***

Date: \_\_\_\_\_

Time: \_\_\_\_\_

Place: \_\_\_\_\_



**Text:** Romans 8 -- *When I meditate on this text, the Lord tells me that....*

*Prayers -- (praises, confessions, requests, etc.)*

## ***My Appointment with God***

Date: \_\_\_\_\_

Time: \_\_\_\_\_

Place: \_\_\_\_\_



**Text:** Philippians 2 -- *When I meditate on this text, the Lord tells me that....*

*Prayers -- (praises, confessions, requests, etc.)*

# ***My Fast***

## ***Terms of the Fast***

*I will abstain from* \_\_\_\_\_

*The fast begins* \_\_\_\_\_  
(Date/Time)

*The fast ends* \_\_\_\_\_  
(Date/Time)

## ***Special Requests for Prayer***

1. \_\_\_\_\_
2. \_\_\_\_\_
3. \_\_\_\_\_

## ***Evaluation***

*Describe this experience.* \_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_.

*Did you fulfill your goal?* \_\_\_\_\_.

*Did you feel any spiritual benefit from this fast, during or after? Explain.*

\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_.

## ***Comprehension Questions***

What is an “appointment with God?” (p.15)

1. \_\_\_\_\_
2. \_\_\_\_\_
3. \_\_\_\_\_

What is the place where Moses met with the Lord on a regular basis? (p.15)

\_\_\_\_\_.

Mention an example of a good context – time and place – to plan an appointment with God?

\_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_. (p.15)

How can we be “natural” with God in our prayers? (p.18)

1. \_\_\_\_\_
2. \_\_\_\_\_
3. \_\_\_\_\_

Mention seven elements of prayer (topics)? (pp.18-21)

1. \_\_\_\_\_.
2. \_\_\_\_\_.
3. \_\_\_\_\_.
4. \_\_\_\_\_.
5. \_\_\_\_\_.
6. \_\_\_\_\_.
7. \_\_\_\_\_.

How would you define “fasting”? (p.21) \_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_.

Is there a specific way a person should fast? (p.21)

\_\_\_\_\_.