

# **Salem Evangelical Lutheran Church**

## **IMAGINE...28 Days of Prayer and Fasting**

### Fasting

**Matthew 6:17-18** <sup>17</sup> But when you fast, put oil on your head and wash your face, <sup>18</sup> so that your fasting may be seen not by others but by your Father who is in secret; and your Father who sees in secret will reward you.

### Week One Fasting Focus:

Skip one meal on one or multiple days. Use the time to pray and read scripture (see prayer focus below). Give the money saved on that meal to the hungry.

### Week Two Fasting Focus:

Give up a television program or another activity that you enjoy. Use that time to pray and read scripture (see prayer focus below).

### Week Three Fasting Focus:

Fast from gossip, complaining, and unkind speech this week. Pray that God will help you recognize them and hold your tongue in those moments. Instead, think of a good quality or kind word and pray a prayer of thanksgiving to God for that person or situation.

### Week Four Fasting Focus:

Consider a 12 or even 24-hour fast from food and drink (water only), or from most food (bread and water only), or from food (water and juice allowed). Use the time not eating and preparing food to pray and read scripture (see prayer focus below).

### Prayer

**1 Thessalonians 5:16-18** <sup>16</sup> Rejoice always, <sup>17</sup> pray without ceasing, <sup>18</sup> give thanks in all circumstances; for this is the will of God in Christ Jesus for you.

### Week One Prayer Focus: Surrender – It's all God's, isn't it?

As consumers, we often ask ourselves "how much can I afford." In God's economy, we are asked, "how much can I give up?" Disciples of Jesus are asked to surrender control. Surrender is a scary word for us. However, Jesus was asked to surrender his life. When we surrender we are in good company, following Jesus. When we can embrace the truth that all that we have is God's and we become willing to lay it at the feet of Jesus, then we can be used by God in extraordinary ways.

### **All to Jesus I Surrender**

All to Jesus I surrender, all to him I freely give;

I will ever love and trust him, in his presence daily live.  
I surrender all, I surrender all.  
All to thee, my blessed Savior, I surrender all.

**James 4:1-10** Those conflicts and disputes among you, where do they come from? Do they not come from your cravings that are at war within you? <sup>2</sup> You want something and do not have it; so you commit murder. And you covet something and cannot obtain it; so you engage in disputes and conflicts. You do not have, because you do not ask. <sup>3</sup> You ask and do not receive, because you ask wrongly, in order to spend what you get on your pleasures. <sup>4</sup> Adulterers! Do you not know that friendship with the world is enmity with God? Therefore whoever wishes to be a friend of the world becomes an enemy of God. <sup>5</sup> Or do you suppose that it is for nothing that the scripture says, "God yearns jealously for the spirit that he has made to dwell in us"? <sup>6</sup> But he gives all the more grace; therefore it says, "God opposes the proud, but gives grace to the humble." <sup>7</sup> Submit yourselves therefore to God. Resist the devil, and he will flee from you. <sup>8</sup> Draw near to God, and he will draw near to you. Cleanse your hands, you sinners, and purify your hearts, you double-minded. <sup>9</sup> Lament and mourn and weep. Let your laughter be turned into mourning and your joy into dejection. <sup>10</sup> Humble yourselves before the Lord, and he will exalt you.

**Romans 8:6-10** <sup>6</sup> To set the mind on the flesh is death, but to set the mind on the Spirit is life and peace. <sup>7</sup> For this reason the mind that is set on the flesh is hostile to God; it does not submit to God's law-- indeed it cannot, <sup>8</sup> and those who are in the flesh cannot please God. <sup>9</sup> ¶ But you are not in the flesh; you are in the Spirit, since the Spirit of God dwells in you. Anyone who does not have the Spirit of Christ does not belong to him. <sup>10</sup> But if Christ is in you, though the body is dead because of sin, the Spirit is life because of righteousness.

**2 Chronicles 30:8-9** <sup>8</sup> Do not now be stiff-necked as your ancestors were, but yield yourselves to the LORD and come to his sanctuary, which he has sanctified forever, and serve the LORD your God, so that his fierce anger may turn away from you. <sup>9</sup> For as you return to the LORD, your kindred and your children will find compassion with their captors, and return to this land. For the LORD your God is gracious and merciful, and will not turn away his face from you, if you return to him."

Week Two Prayer Focus: Sacrifice - *"The willingness to give up something I love for something I love (or should love) even more!"*

Sacrifice is not something most people know much about. We are truly a blessed people. Sacrifice is a difficult premise and is one with which we struggle. In the garden we see how Jesus deeply struggled as he contemplated the sacrifice of giving His life and taking on the sins of the world. Ultimately, Jesus was able to cry out "not my will but yours" so that people could come to know God. What is worth our sacrifice? Anything that is for the same cause - that people who are far away from God will come to know Him through the love of Jesus Christ.

### **LBW# 98 Alas! And Did My Savior Bleed**

Alas! And did my Savior bleed, and did my sovereign die?  
Would he devote that sacred head for sinners such as I?

But tears of grief cannot repay the debt of love I owe;  
Here, Lord, I give myself away: it's all that I can do.

**Hebrews 13:15-17** <sup>15</sup> Through him, then, let us continually offer a sacrifice of praise to God, that is, the fruit of lips that confess his name. <sup>16</sup> Do not neglect to do good and to share what you have, for such sacrifices are pleasing to God. <sup>17</sup> ¶ Obey your leaders and submit to them, for

they are keeping watch over your souls and will give an account. Let them do this with joy and not with sighing-- for that would be harmful to you.

**1 John 4:8-12** <sup>8</sup> Whoever does not love does not know God, for God is love. <sup>9</sup> God's love was revealed among us in this way: God sent his only Son into the world so that we might live through him. <sup>10</sup> In this is love, not that we loved God but that he loved us and sent his Son to be the atoning sacrifice for our sins. <sup>11</sup> Beloved, since God loved us so much, we also ought to love one another. <sup>12</sup> No one has ever seen God; if we love one another, God lives in us, and his love is perfected in us.

**Romans 12:1-5** I appeal to you therefore, brothers and sisters, by the mercies of God, to present your bodies as a living sacrifice, holy and acceptable to God, which is your spiritual worship. <sup>2</sup> Do not be conformed to this world, but be transformed by the renewing of your minds, so that you may discern what is the will of God-- what is good and acceptable and perfect. <sup>3</sup> ¶ For by the grace given to me I say to everyone among you not to think of yourself more highly than you ought to think, but to think with sober judgment, each according to the measure of faith that God has assigned. <sup>4</sup> For as in one body we have many members, and not all the members have the same function, <sup>5</sup> so we, who are many, are one body in Christ, and individually we are members one of another.

**Week Three Prayer Focus: Faith** – So often we tend to focus on what we can do. Our prayers often focus solely on what “we” need, or what we think we need. Faith is the belief that God can and will work through us. It is a shift in focus from “I” to “others.” The question that faith asks is not, “What can I afford? or “What can I do?, but “What can God do through me?” In fact the scripture says that “without faith we cannot please God.”

### **LBW# 479 My Faith Looks Up To Thee**

My faith looks up to thee, Thou Lamb of Calvary, Savior divine!  
Now hear me while I pray, take all my guilt away,  
Oh, let me from this day be wholly thine!

**1 John 5:1-5** Everyone who believes that Jesus is the Christ has been born of God, and everyone who loves the parent loves the child. <sup>2</sup> By this we know that we love the children of God, when we love God and obey his commandments. <sup>3</sup> For the love of God is this, that we obey his commandments. And his commandments are not burdensome, <sup>4</sup> for whatever is born of God conquers the world. And this is the victory that conquers the world, our faith. <sup>5</sup> Who is it that conquers the world but the one who believes that Jesus is the Son of God?

**1 Peter 5:6-11** <sup>6</sup> ¶ Humble yourselves therefore under the mighty hand of God, so that he may exalt you in due time. <sup>7</sup> Cast all your anxiety on him, because he cares for you. <sup>8</sup> Discipline yourselves, keep alert. Like a roaring lion your adversary the devil prowls around, looking for someone to devour. <sup>9</sup> Resist him, steadfast in your faith, for you know that your brothers and sisters in all the world are undergoing the same kinds of suffering. <sup>10</sup> And after you have suffered for a little while, the God of all grace, who has called you to his eternal glory in Christ, will himself restore, support, strengthen, and establish you. <sup>11</sup> To him be the power forever and ever. Amen.

**Romans 10:11-17** <sup>11</sup> The scripture says, "No one who believes in him will be put to shame." <sup>12</sup> For there is no distinction between Jew and Greek; the same Lord is Lord of all and is generous to all who call on him. <sup>13</sup> For, "Everyone who calls on the name of the Lord shall be saved." <sup>14</sup> ¶ But how are they to call on one in whom they have not believed? And how are they to believe in one of whom they have never heard? And how are they to hear without someone to proclaim him? <sup>15</sup> And how are they to proclaim him unless they are sent? As it is written, "How beautiful are the feet of those who bring good news!" <sup>16</sup> But not all have obeyed the good news; for Isaiah says, "Lord, who has believed our message?" <sup>17</sup> So faith comes from what is heard, and what is heard comes through the word of Christ.

Week Four Prayer Focus: Genuine Commitment – We live in a commitment-adverse society, where we proclaim a God who has committed everything in order to be in relationship with us.

The importance of "commitment" cannot be overemphasized. The spiritual journey is not a sprint but more like a marathon. The Imagine... Stewardship Campaign is also more like a marathon. There will be times when we want to quit, there will be moments when the pain of sacrifice causes us to want to give up, there will be seasons that it seems impossible to finish. However, scripture reminds us "He is faithful to complete the work he has begun in each of us." Wherever God leads, God provides. If we truly have experienced Christ and have been willing to respond in faith, we CAN be confident of God's desire and ability to provide all that is necessary in fulfilling our commitment to Christ's church.

**LBW #406 Take My Life, That I May Be**

Take my life, that I may be consecrated, Lord, to thee;  
Take my moments and my days; let them flow in ceaseless praise.

Take my silver and my gold, not a mite would I withhold;  
Take my intellect, and use every power as thou shalt choose.

Take my will and make it thine; it shall be no longer mine.  
Take my heart, it is thine own; it shall be thy royal throne.

**Leviticus 24:5-9** <sup>5</sup> ¶ You shall take choice flour, and bake twelve loaves of it; two-tenths of an ephah shall be in each loaf. <sup>6</sup> You shall place them in two rows, six in a row, on the table of pure gold. <sup>7</sup> You shall put pure frankincense with each row, to be a token offering for the bread, as an offering by fire to the LORD. <sup>8</sup> Every Sabbath day Aaron shall set them in order before the LORD regularly as a commitment of the people of Israel, as a covenant forever. <sup>9</sup> They shall be for Aaron and his descendants, who shall eat them in a holy place, for they are most holy portions for him from the offerings by fire to the LORD, a perpetual due.

**Deuteronomy 12:8-12** <sup>8</sup> You shall not act as we are acting here today, all of us according to our own desires, <sup>9</sup> for you have not yet come into the rest and the possession that the LORD your God is giving you. <sup>10</sup> When you cross over the Jordan and live in the land that the LORD your God is allotting to you, and when he gives you rest from your enemies all around so that you live in safety, <sup>11</sup> then you shall bring everything that I command you to the place that the LORD your God will choose as a dwelling for his name: your burnt offerings and your sacrifices, your tithes and your donations, and all your choice votive gifts that you vow to the LORD. <sup>12</sup> And you shall rejoice before the LORD your God, you together with your sons and your daughters, your male and female slaves, and the Levites who reside in your towns (since they have no allotment or inheritance with you).

**Ephesians 1:7-14** <sup>7</sup> In him we have redemption through his blood, the forgiveness of our trespasses, according to the riches of his grace <sup>8</sup> that he lavished on us. With all wisdom and insight <sup>9</sup> he has made known to us the mystery of his will, according to his good pleasure that he set forth in Christ, <sup>10</sup> as a plan for the fullness of time, to gather up all things in him, things in heaven and things on earth. <sup>11</sup> In Christ we have also obtained an inheritance, having been destined according to the purpose of him who accomplishes all things according to his counsel and will, <sup>12</sup> so that we, who were the first to set our hope on Christ, might live for the praise of his glory. <sup>13</sup> In him you also, when you had heard the word of truth, the gospel of your salvation, and

had believed in him, were marked with the seal of the promised Holy Spirit; <sup>14</sup> this is the pledge of our inheritance toward redemption as God's own people, to the praise of his glory.