



LETTER FROM THE PASTOR

Consecrated | Why We're Fasting Together, August 10th - 30th

Garden Family,

God has been so kind to our church! We've watched people encounter Jesus, find healing, step into freedom, be baptized, and discover community. Beautiful momentum is happening in our house! Yet, we never want to confuse momentum with maturity. Before we ask God to entrust us with more, we want Him to do a deeper work within us.

Throughout Scripture, whenever God prepared His people for something new, He first called them closer. The last several weeks, I've sensed the Lord inviting us deeper - not into more activity, but into greater intimacy; not into another event, but into a deeper life of consecration. Consecration always comes before commission.

Israel stood on the edge of the Promised Land, and before they ever crossed the Jordan, Joshua declared, "Consecrate yourselves, for tomorrow the Lord will do wonders among you" (Joshua 3:5, ESV). Before Jesus preached a single sermon or performed a single miracle, He was led by the Spirit into the wilderness to fast and pray (Matthew 4:1-2). Before the church at Antioch sent Paul and Barnabas into the mission field, they were worshiping, praying, and fasting together when the Holy Spirit spoke (Acts 13:2-3). Again and again, we see the same pattern. God prepares His people in His presence before He sends them into His purposes.

That is why, beginning August 10th, we are setting aside twenty-one days as a church family to pray and fast, together.

Fasting is not about earning God's favor. Consecration is not a religious exercise or a spiritual challenge. It is our way of saying, "Jesus, before anything else, we want You." Hunger has always preceded harvest, and we believe the Lord is inviting us to become a people whose greatest appetite is for His presence.

Isaiah 58 gives us an important warning. God's people were fasting, but their hearts remained unchanged - they were going through the motion while continuing to mistreat one another. God's response was clear: "Is not this the fast that I choose: to loose the bonds of wickedness... to let the oppressed go free... Is it not to share your bread with the hungry?" (Isaiah 58:6-7). In other words, if our fasting doesn't transform the way we love, forgive, serve and care for others, we've missed its purpose.

We're not simply choosing to be hungry for twenty-one days. We're asking the Holy Spirit to use that hunger to transform us from the inside out. May our homes become places of peace. May our conversations become more gracious. May forgiveness come more quickly. May generosity become more

natural. May our hearts become more attentive to the voice of God.

One of the beautiful things about a corporate fast is that we don't enter it alone; we enter it together. We will pray together, worship together, wait on the Lord together and encourage one another, together. There is something powerful that happens when an entire church fixes its eyes on Jesus at the same time. God has always formed a people before He entrusted them with a mission.

Dallas Willard reminds us that spiritual transformation doesn't happen by trying harder, it happens through training. The practices of Jesus slowly reshape us into the people He created us to become. Fasting is one of those practices. Every skipped meal becomes another opportunity to pray. Every craving becomes another invitation to depend on Christ. Every moment of weakness becomes a reminder that our deepest hunger has never been for food, but for God Himself.

What surprises many people is that fasting doesn't just reveal our hunger; it reveals our freedom. It exposes how many things quietly compete for our affection and reminds us that Jesus is enough. When we learn to say no to lesser appetites, we become more available to the greater life He offers. Fasting doesn't save us; Christ alone does that. Fasting has a way of loosening the grip of distractions and reordering our loves until our hearts begin to beat in rhythm with His.

During this Month of Prayer, we are believing in God for more than answered prayers. We are believing God for transformation. We're praying for salvation, healing, restored families, renewed passion for God's Word, boldness to share the gospel and fresh unity within our church! We are asking the Holy Spirit to shape us into a people who carry His presence wherever we go. More than anything else, we're asking to know Jesus more deeply. The greatest gift of prayer has never been the answers we receive; it has always been the God we encounter.

Beginning August 10th, we invite every person in our church family to prayerfully choose a fast. Whether you choose a full fast, a Daniel Fast, a partial fast, or laying aside another meaningful distraction, let it become an intentional act of consecration. Pair your fasting with daily Scripture, prayer, worship and moments of quiet before the Lord. Also, please engage with our Sunday evening prayer gatherings on August 16th and August 23th. Lastly, let's join together on August 30th as we conclude the month of prayer with a night of worship and prayer.

Church, let's become a people who are easier to lead because we've learned to listen to the voice of our Shepherd. Let's become a people who love more deeply because we've spent time in the presence of Jesus. Let's become a people who carry His Kingdom into every neighborhood, workplace and table He sends us to!

Love you, Garden family! I can't wait to seek the Lord with you!

Pastor Jeremy