

Prayer in the Evening Hours

Jesus said “When you fast, do not look sombre as the hypocrites do, for they disfigure their faces to show others they are fasting. Truly I tell you, they have received their reward in full. But when you fast, put oil on your head and wash your face, so that it will not be obvious to others that you are fasting, but only to your Father, who is unseen; and your Father, who sees what is done in secret, will reward you.” (Matthew 6:16- 18)

Jesus words on fasting are such a challenge to some of us! Let's be honest, he assumes that we will be doing it, and because He sees what is done in secret, He knows when we are not! He doesn't castigate his hearers. But in a firm and yet gentle way He challenges His disciples to build fasting into their spiritual disciplines, not as an outward display, but as an inward journey, seen only by the Father. For what purpose we might ask? Books have been written in answer to that question, drawing on a rich strand of teaching in the scriptures, and are worth our reading. But maybe it is significant that Jesus' teaching on fasting in the Sermon on the Mount comes between His teaching on prayer and His teaching on storing up riches in heaven. Fasting releases time and energy and focus for prayer, and time with the One who alone can satisfy our deepest appetites. Fasting also makes space in our lives for the treasure which God alone can bring into the storehouse of our inner lives.

For each hour of the Day we are suggesting a scripture to reflect on and a topic for your prayer and intercession.

6.00pm Matthew 6:16- 18 It is maybe rather cruel to make Jesus' teaching on fasting the theme we focus on at dinner time! Or maybe it is a helpful time to think about the place that food has in our lives, both for good and sometimes for ill. Take some time this hour to thank God for the fruit of the land and the plenty many of us enjoy, and pray for those in poverty and in want. But pray also for a renewed appetite for God within the life of our churches; a hunger for the bread of life, a thirst for the water of life. Pray that we will collectively, and each of us personally, hunger after God, thirst for God, for the living God. And pray for the renewal of those spiritual disciplines that have fed the people of God down the centuries, and day by day and year by year have been channels in which God's grace flows. Pray for a praying church, a fasting church, a worshipping church, a learning church, a bible loving church, a church that can say No to the ephemeral and Yes to the eternal.

7.00pm Ezekiel 47:1- 12 Take some time to visualise this vivid prophetic image of the river flowing from the Temple. Pray from it for a whole church in the UK that is venturing into deeper spiritual waters. Indeed, pray for a church that is going deeper in the things of the Spirit, not settling for the shallow and superficial, but stepping progressively into the greater depths of the riches of the wisdom and knowledge of God. Pray that God will unsettle those who have been in the shallow end for too long, and give them a longing to venture into the deep. Visualise the man of bronze, visualise Jesus, taking your church by the hand, the churches you know by the hand, and taking them into the deeper things of the Spirit, even to the riskiest place of relinquishing control of the church, feet off the bottom. And pray for a river of God's Spirit to flow from within the church in the UK, that will bring life and fruitfulness and healing to the territory around. Pray for the renewal of the land.

8.00pm Titus 3:3-8 Please take some time during this hour to pray for the work of ReSource for Anglican Renewal Ministries, and our close partners SOMA UK and the Scargill Movement, as we work in our different spheres for renewal by the Holy Spirit, whom the Father has poured on us generously through Jesus Christ our Saviour. Please pray for the opening of doors to our ministry in little, local and ordinary churches in the UK. Pray for leaders at all levels of the church to see the value of our ministry and to advocate for us and be gatekeepers who fling wide the doors of churches, dioceses, denominations to the contribution we can make. Please pray for the team of ReSource Ministers who deliver our work, and for God to appoint others in His good time, and for their work and that of the Director and staff during the period of the lockdown and beyond. Pray for the Trustees and Discernment Group, for deep wisdom in their oversight and guidance. And pray that in everything ReSource will abide in Christ and be led by the Spirit and give glory to the Father.

9.00pm Matthew 28:16-20 Pray during this hour for the evangelistic calling on the church in the UK, and its obedience to Jesus' commission to make disciples. Thank God for those who He has especially gifted to be evangelists, and pray for them. But pray that the whole church might warm again to its mandate to be Jesus' witnesses at home and nearby and far distant and to the ends of the earth. Pray for the power of the Holy Spirit to be poured out afresh to release the church into more confident and committed evangelism. Take time to pray for those within your circle of family and friends who don't know Christ, and pray for opportunities to share your faith with them. Pray for your neighbours and work or friendship groups. Pray for your neighbourhood. Pray for your village, town or city. Pray in each of these places for more disciples of Jesus, baptised in the name of the Father, Son and Holy Spirit, and obeying everything Jesus teaches.

10.00pm Luke 9:28-36 As the day begins to draw to its close take this time to be still before God, to review the day, to gather up all that God has said to you, and to listen to Him in the silence. Try and stem the words. Hold back the tide for a while! And just listen. Ears open, hands open maybe, if that is helpful. Listen. What is God saying, even in the gentle whisper, the still small voice? Keep a pen and paper nearby, and jot down what you believe He may be saying to you, and even saying to you for others. Pray, indeed, that the church will be a listening church, deeply attentive to the words that God speaks. A church that is comfortable with silence. A church in which God-filled, awesome, silence punctuates its gatherings. For times when the music fades and all is stripped away and we simply come.

11.00pm Psalms 121 You will have prayed much today, and listened, let's end it on a note of thankfulness. And if you are alert enough still to pray for the renewal of the church, pray for the renewal of the church's worship, suffused with thankfulness, running over with gratitude. Pray for those who lead worship in your church, and clergy and lay leaders who front worship across the country. Pray for choirs and worship groups, musicians and vocalists who lead the sung worship of the people of God. Pray that this will be filled to overflowing with the creative beauty and tender melody of the Holy Spirit's presence. But as the day closes thank God for all that He has put into your hands and into your heart today. And thank Him, with the psalmist that as you turn to sleep He who watches over you will neither slumber nor sleep; that the moon cannot harm you by night; and He will keep you from all harm and watch over you.