

THE RENEWAL *of* **ALL THINGS**

May 2018 Fast



southlands
church

“And I heard a loud voice from the throne saying, ‘Behold, the dwelling place of God is with man. He will dwell with them, and they will be his people, and God himself will be with them as their God. He will wipe away every tear from their eyes, and death shall be no more, neither shall there be mourning, nor crying, nor pain anymore, for the former things have passed away.’ And he who was seated on the throne said, ‘Behold, I am making all things new.’ Also he said, ‘Write this down, for these words are trustworthy and true.’”

Revelation 21:3-5

DEAR SOUTHLANDERS,

Thank you for joining us in our time of fasting and prayer over the next three days and nights. I am confident that the Lord will meet us in significant ways as we deny ourselves to seek Him. He is good and gracious and delights to draw near to His people.

Our Sojourn series has been a needed reminder of our true citizenship in heaven. While we live as sent ones in this world, we live with longing for our true Country where we will finally and forever dwell with our true King. This passage from Revelation is a stunning glimpse of that glorious day when Jesus will make all things new.

However, our longing need not be limited to going to heaven someday. Jesus invites us as His disciples to pray, "Your Kingdom come, Your will be done, on earth as it is in heaven." (Matthew 6:10) The full renewal that we will see in heaven one day is something that advances progressively on earth as Jesus' people pray for His kingdom to come. Because of His death and resurrection, because of His outpoured Spirit, Jesus is progressively bringing renewal to His people, who in turn bring renewal to their world.

So we are going to focus on three different themes of renewal over the next three days.

We have asked various people from our different communities to contribute on the various themes to help us encounter God in meaningful ways throughout our days. We will pick up on these themes each night as we worship and pray together too.

Please join us in seeking the One who is making all things new!

Gratefully,

Alan

WHY DO WE FAST?

Fasting has long been a powerful component in the life of Christian worship. Jesus began his public ministry after 40 days of prayer and fasting in the wilderness. He spoke of fasting in the Gospels (Matt. 6:16-18; 9:14-15) and the early church practiced it (Acts 9:9, 13:2, 14:23). Fasting has been a part of the Southlands story too, and many significant moments of direction and vision for the church have come directly out of church-wide fasts. But what is fasting for? Is it just some sort of sanctified diet? In short, we deny ourselves food in order to feast on Jesus.

1. The physical hunger we feel in a fast intensifies our longings for Jesus. In our pain and discomfort we desperately seek God, cry out to him. We recognize more clearly our dependence on God and our hunger and thirst for more of his presence.
2. The combination of prayer and fasting (the two always go together!) helps remove distractions and allows us to focus on Jesus. The time we don't spend eating is more time we can spend in silence, prayer, listening to God. In our busy lives, fasting helps us create space to meditate on God's Word and allow the Holy Spirit to speak.
3. All of this is not just for our own spiritual renewal, but to empower us to bring renewal to our world. It is significant that just prior to beginning his public ministry, Jesus fasted. The 40 days in the wilderness was for Jesus a preparatory time, a season of struggle and temptation and isolation (similar to the 40 day period the Israelites spent in the wilderness prior to entering the Promised Land), and yet one that clearly catalyzed his forward momentum in mission.

TIPS FOR FASTING

- If this is your first fast, ease into it. Don't feel the pressure to go without food for all three days. Start with fasting a meal a day, then gradually build up to a full day.
- An intermediate fast would be what is known as a "Daniel Fast" this is where you abstain from choice food, meat, and wine and only eat vegetables and drink water.
- If you are fasting from food, we typically encourage a juice fast which would include fruit juice and soup/broth and water.
- We only recommend a full water only fast if you have experience fasting and/or participated in one of the these other versions before.
- The idea behind fasting is to abstain from a routine habit/practice for the sake of spiritual hunger. You may not be able to fast from food due to health reasons, etc. so consider abstaining from social media, television, or any other habitual practice in your day that you can set aside for the sake of focused prayer.
- The fast begins after dinner on Sunday night. Don't eat a massive, greasy meal as your last meal. You'll regret it!
- At some point during each day of the fast, find a 30-minute time slot (at least) to read that day's devotional. Ideally this is in a quiet, distraction-free place where you can have uninterrupted time. Bring your juice and ask Jesus to be your nourishment! Feasting on the word of God will do wonders for a growling stomach.
- On each day there will be a theme and a passage of Scripture to contemplate. The idea is to read and meditate on the Scripture for a good 15 minutes, and then spend 15 (or more) minutes in prayer.

- The meditation part is key. It bridges the gap between hearing from God (in Scripture) and speaking to him in prayer. Puritan Thomas Manton said this: “What we take in by the word we digest by meditation and let out by prayer.” This will be the model for our daily devotionals during the fast.
- If your days are full and you can’t find the time to take a break, consider reading through the booklet on Sunday night, to prepare your heart for what’s to come.
- If you have kids this a great opportunity to introduce them and include them to the concept of fasting. Make sure you clarify the purpose of fasting in an age-appropriate manner. Much of how they will participate will depend on their age so here are some age appropriate suggestions:
 - Age 5-9: Abstaining from candy, soda and dessert.
 - Age 10-13: Abstaining from one meal during the day. This HAS to be done wisely and with faith, if it is an intense sports season consider a protein drink as a meal replacement.
 - 14 and older: Depending on the maturity of your child, they can make the same choices that you, as an adult would make.
- If you do have children that are abstaining from food, this is obviously a great opportunity to be more intentional with family prayer and/or devotions.

DAY ONE

Monday, May 7 | Karin Saltas, Southlands Fullerton

RENEWING OUR LOVE

The church in Ephesus is laudable in so many ways. Jesus commends them for being faithful in their labor, patient in their suffering and sound in their doctrine. Yet, they have fallen in a most serious and grievous area, they have forsaken their first love. In a culture that is dominated by performance and accomplishment this seems discordant to us, but it is the most serious ill of all because in the words of Spurgeon, “Lose love, lose all.” In the biblical weighing of things, even the greatest works and feats done in the absence of love are empty and gain nothing.

SCRIPTURE

Revelation 2:4-6

“But I have this against you, that you have abandoned the love you had at first. Remember therefore from where you have fallen; repent, and do the works you did at first. If not, I will come to you and remove your lampstand from its place, unless you repent. Yet this you have: you hate the works of the Nicolaitans, which I also hate.”

MEDITATION

1. Remember: Spend a few moments pausing and recalling what it was like when your heart was first gripped with the work and person of Jesus, when He was your supreme treasure and pleasure.
2. Repent: This includes a recognition of wrong-doing and a decision to move in a different direction. Spend a few minutes in quiet where you allow the Holy Spirit to bring conviction and change.

3. Return: This is clearly not a call to renewed service or activity (they were already commended for their toil and labor), but it is a call to affection for and devotion to Christ from which everything overflows.

In my journey one of the most helpful things I have found when my heart is tepid, and my service mechanical is to redirect my gaze. Personally, beautifully worded theology, in book or hymn, helps to redirect my heart's attention. Saturating myself in the supremacy and magnificence of our God makes Him compelling to me once more. Choosing to pray also disciplines me to a posture of humility and gratitude.

PRAYER

The following questions may be helpful in auditing the condition of your heart and praying:

- Is God your source of life, love and joy or are you looking for recreation and satisfaction in other things?
- Are you seeking the comfort of your body over the prosperity of your soul?
- Are you hearing the tender voice of your Savior, who is constantly at work and at watch in the church, say a “nevertheless” to you in regard to your first love?
- What are some things that stir your affections for Jesus?
- What are some things that dampen your affections for Jesus?
- A.W. Tozer says, “When the eyes of the soul looking out meet the eyes of the God looking in, heaven has begun right here on this earth.” What are some ways that you can redirect your gaze?

DAY TWO

Tuesday, May 8 | Andrew Bunk, Southlands Whittier

RENEWING OUR MIND

In many Christian circles, the mantra is to try harder, do better, and somehow become more holy. This is the way to become more like Christ, or so it is thought. But what we find here in Paul's command to be transformed is just the opposite, it is receiving transformation. What this means is transformation is not something that we can ensure on our own efforts as if holiness and its pursuit were through behavior modification. Oftentimes, this pursuit causes many to feel guilt, as if they didn't try hard enough or there was something deficient in their own efforts. This is simply not true. Paul contrasts the transformation with the conforming of the world, as if the world was molding us into its own image. The world consumes by forcing people into its own mold but we find that Jesus says to us, "Take heart, I have overcome the world." This is what brings transformation, which Paul calls the renewing of our minds. We must consent to the Spirit's work in our lives through our own neediness and helplessness—the very opposite of the individualistic pull-yourself-up-by-your-bootstraps mentality.

SCRIPTURE

Romans 12:2

"Do not be conformed to this world, but be transformed by the renewal of your mind, that by testing you may discern what is the will of God, what is good and acceptable and perfect."

MEDITATION

1. What ways are you trying to form yourself through conforming rather than through the Spirit's transforming?
2. What area of dependence is the Spirit calling you to in this season?

3. What has been your experience of guilt in your formation as a Christian?
4. In what ways are you trying to live your Christian life through the individualistic pull-yourself-up-by-your-bootstraps mentality?

PRAYER

- Pray for an awareness of the Spirit's work in your life, especially during this time of fasting. Often during fasting, God will bring up many things to us that he is working on. Take some time to reflect on what He is doing.
- Pray for the renewal of your mind. There are many areas where we subconsciously and consciously do not believe the Gospel, places where we have not let God work yet.
- Pray for resistance against the conforming of the world. Ask God for faith to believe in Jesus' victory over it.

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DAY THREE

Wednesday, May 9 | Kelly & Marianne Monaghan, Southlands Chino

RENEWING OUR WORLD

Today we conclude the fast by shifting our attention outward. When we consider 'renewal' we often let it stay at just the work God is doing in us and don't keep in mind that as renewal takes place in us it should spur us on to transform and affect the world around us. We must challenge ourselves to not only yield to personal renewal but to long for God to work in AND through us as we boldly affect the world we live in. Just like the prophet Isaiah who, after seeing God for who He truly is, turns inward and recognizes his own wretchedness, ultimately moves from a revelation of his sinful and dependent state and turns to an outward response of "Here am I, send me." As we have gone through our days of fasting through renewal, hopefully you have experienced, like Isaiah, not only an awareness of God's greatness but also your absolute dependence on Him. However, like Isaiah, experiencing both God's glory and our dependence should result in a deep longing to proclaim and demonstrate our inward renewal in an outward way: "Here we are, send us."

SCRIPTURE

Acts 5:12-16

"Now many signs and wonders were regularly done among the people by the hands of the apostles. And they were all together in Solomon's Portico. None of the rest dared join them, but the people held them in high esteem. And more than ever believers were added to the Lord, multitudes of both men and women, so that they even carried out the sick into the streets and laid them on cots and mats, that as Peter came by at least his shadow might fall on some of them. The people also gathered from the towns around Jerusalem, bringing the sick and those afflicted with unclean spirits, and they were all healed."

MEDITATION

1. What are the things that the Holy Spirit sparked in you as you read this passage?
2. What are the things you noticed about how the church brought renewal into their world?
3. What are the things the Holy Spirit is telling you to start or stop doing in regard to bringing renewal to the world around you?

PRAYER

- The example of the church in this passage is one of boldness in the area of renewal to others. Pray for boldness to be an agent of renewal to those whom God has intentionally placed in your life.
- Pray for empowerment from the Holy Spirit to live in high esteem among unbelievers around you so that you would have a bridge to bring renewal into their lives.
- One of the markers of renewal is healing, both physically and spiritually. Pray for the renewal of both spiritual and physical healing for those you personally know who need God to heal them.

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