

April 20, 2020

Good Monday!

I'm going to take a different approach this morning. And to give credit where credit is due, this encouragement letter is the result of a request a friend of mine, who also happens to be the Executive Director of the denomination through which my life ordination was granted—the Churches of God, General Conference. Pastor Lance Finley has called the Church to a time of prayer and fasting and to seek the Lord in light of the current COVID-19 crisis. He (and I) is asking that you set aside **THIS** Wednesday, April 22, 2020 as this day. Below are some guidelines in which we can be praying on Wednesday.

Now I recognize that not all of us are able to fast (go without food). There are some who medically cannot or should not go without eating for a day. Perhaps the idea of fasting for one meal might be something that you can do. I will leave that to you. While the practice of fasting is not a common theme in the New Testament, there is evidence in the Book of Acts where the early Church fasted as the church grew and multiplied (Acts 13:2-3; Acts 14:23). While Jesus did not give a command to fast, His own practice while in the wilderness of fasting for 40 days shows evidence of the validity of it, and He also made a statement in Matthew 4:2 that plainly tells us that He saw it as a valuable discipline. There he said that “when you fast,” not “if” you fast. Regardless, in the face of our current pandemic, I would invite you to join me (if you can) in a day of prayer and fasting. If you can't fast, perhaps you can be diligent in prayer all day. Here is what Pastor Finley suggests:

We have much to lift up in prayer:

- That God would end the COVID-19 pandemic.
- For comfort for those grieving the great loss of life.
- For healing for those afflicted with the virus.
- For protection for the many doctors, nurses, medical professionals, first response personnel, service industry workers, truck drivers and other essential workers who are working to save lives and provide for others' need through this crisis.

- For our leaders: national, state and local leaders - that God would bless them with great wisdom, courage and strength as they lead.
- For the many struggling with depression and isolation during this time of social distancing.
- For God's abundant provision for those who are now unemployed as a result of the pandemic.
- For the many children who are in difficult situations and suffering from the lack of structure and rhythm.
- For the many relationships that are strained and working through the additional stresses brought on by this crisis.
- For our brothers and sisters around the globe who are facing the same challenges and difficulties without the safety nets that many of us have access to in the Western world.

Let's seek the Lord in this season. Let's cry out to Him and seek His mercy, provision and direction for our lives, our families, our churches and our communities.

Let's ask our gracious and loving Father to bring His kingdom here on earth as it is in Heaven.

As I mentioned in our Worship Service on Sunday, I am hoping that the Governor's plan to reopen the state of Ohio will soon give us some guidelines on what our next steps will be to bring our church back together on Sundays. It will most likely be something that is gradual and with some changes. I will be asking the elders to meet soon to talk about what this all may look like.

Until then—stay safe and know that I love you all.

Blessings!

Pastor Tim