

## PRAY AND FAST

Scripture used: [Luke 4:1-4 \(NLT\)](#)

### OVERVIEW

Pastor Hurmon preached a poignant message today with the global coronavirus pandemic at the top of mind. We must not be petrified by fear, but stay focused on the ultimate hope and victory we have because of God's love through Jesus Christ. As we are in the season preparing for Easter, which is the deepest expression of God's redemptive power, we are invited to enter into a deeper experience of prayer and fasting. As we fast and pray, we become sensitive not only to our own needs, but also to the needs of others.

In our 40 days of prayer and fasting, we are invited to pray for five people who are far from God. We are invited to serve others, remembering that the Christian Church expanded dramatically in the 2nd century when the Roman Empire faced a series of plagues and early Christians modeled an attitude of sacrifice, charity, and service. We are invited to give generously so we can continue to invest in transforming communities around us, especially in a time of need. Psalm 139 reminds us to quiet our anxious thoughts, to ask God to point out where we offend Him, and to lead us along the path.

Note: NBCC is closely monitoring guidance and ordinances on public gatherings. We anticipate continuing our Sunday Worship Gatherings, but if we need to make adjustments, we are also working on a live streaming/online option for our entire Worship Gathering (including musical worship), which we hope will not only be a blessing to our church community, but also to our neighbors and beyond, especially in this time where everyone is wrestling with high anxiety, high isolation, and a deep need for community, support, and hope.

### KEY POINTS

- 1) In our Scripture today, Jesus goes into the wilderness for a 40-day self-imposed "quarantine." Jesus was a carpenter, a fisherman, and a teacher. For 40 days, He removed Himself to face total solitude, hunger, and contemplation. He has opened up space to be with the Father. The temptations He faces in prayer and fasting prepare Him for the challenges He will face when His fasting is completed. This is an unbelievably inspirational story as we are about to face our own quarantine, solitude, and worry because of the pandemic.
- 2) Jesus confronts His uncertainties, fears, and doubts. His very sense of mission and purpose are challenged. The devil challenges our convictions: "If you are what you think you are, prove to me..."
- 3) Jesus faces temptation to walk away from His destiny, to quit, or to foolishly test or constrain God. He then remembers that it's irresponsible to test God through misguided action or inaction.
- 4) Jesus deals directly with the omnipresence of suffering; the reality that awaits us all that life is essentially tragic and fraught with peril. [Mark 1:13 \(NLT\)](#) reminds us that we are not forsaken, but accompanied lovingly in our suffering, and ultimately saved. "The angels took care of him." We are not left to the wild animals of the desert, but ministered to, and empowered.

### DISCUSSION

- 1) **HEAR** - Discern your heart. Have you committed to a season of prayer and fasting? Have you decided what you will fast from? Have set a time and a place for regular time with God? Have you determined the people you will be praying for in this season?
- 2) **UNDERSTAND** - When we fast and pray, the cravings and longings we feel in fasting remind us that our true longing and need is deeper intimacy with God, and we are able to turn to Him in prayer. Have you had experiences of prayer and fasting that remind you of Jesus' experience in [Luke 4:1-4 \(NLT\)](#)? How has God spoken to you in prior times of prayer or fasting? Share those experiences with one another. Spend time in your life group praying for one another, and praying for those around you as the Bay Area goes through a high anxiety season.
- 3) **DO** - If you haven't already, download the NBCC app (text "NBCC App" to 77977) to be kept up to date with NBCC schedule changes, and use the app to sign up for our daily devotional email. Look for ways to serve others around you in this time of high anxiety about the Coronavirus, including checking in on a neighbor, calling a family member, or providing practical assistance to someone in need.