

## Prayer and Fasting

Prayer is direct conversation and communion with God, whether spoken or silent, planned or spontaneous, individual or corporate. This conversation with God involves expressing gratitude, asking for grace or guidance, asking for help in our time of need, or seeking a renewed sense of fellowship with God as our heavenly Father.

*Personal prayer* is the heartbeat of Christian experience. It is a mark of our devotion and intimacy with God. Our personal prayer life is rooted in our relationship with God as our Father. We pray because we are God's children, through faith in the Lord Jesus as our Saviour, and with the Spirit of God in our hearts. An active prayer life arises from our sense of dependence upon God; the motivation for our prayer arises from the promises of God; and we pray with the expectation that God will answer our prayers.

*Corporate prayer* is rooted in our relationship with other believers in Christ. It arises out of our understanding of the church as the body of Christ and our shared Christian experience. It is central to the life and worship of the church. Corporate prayer connects us around the common purpose of seeking God's heart, seeking His blessing on His church as a body of believers, and crying out to Him for His presence, His power, and His peace in our world. There is a special sense of unity, togetherness, agreement and affirmation in corporate prayer. God is glorified when His people are united in prayer.

Corporate prayer in the Word of God is often accompanied by *fasting*. We live in the fast lane of life in this world – the world of work, the world of leisure, and even the world of the church. We need regular periods of fasting because too often the space that belongs to God in our lives is filled with other things. A fast is about humbling our hearts before God. It is about giving up the things in which we seek our satisfaction to rediscover our satisfaction in God. In the words of John Piper, 'The birthplace of Christian fasting is homesickness for God.'

Our appetites dictate the direction of our lives. But fasting means more than giving up things. Fasting, according to the Bible, means to voluntarily reduce or eliminate your intake of food for the purpose of seeking a deeper, more intimate and fruitful relationship with God. We need food for our nourishment and survival. Fasting, abstaining from food for a period, shows that our appetite for God is of greater importance than for our appetite everything else, even for the food which is essential for our survival. If you have any medical conditions, do seek medical advice first to ensure you have an appropriate plan in place.

*Thanks go to Rev Callum Macleod, Moderator of the 2024 General Assembly for this guide.*