

Ebe 24-7 Prayer Week - Why not clear space in your diary to spend **extended time** to communicate with God? Come to the prayer room or use an hour slot and stay at home. Why not try a 24hour **fast** or more...? As an overflow of spending time with God, why not encourage someone you know or don't know with a '**random act of kindness**'?

Fasting

Fasting is the voluntary giving up of something we normally do regularly (watching TV, food, chocolate, Facebook, alcohol) in order to increase our focus and time commitment for God. Most commonly fasting is linked to food and can mean a normal fast from all food, a 'Daniel' fast (see Daniel 1:12) of a very simple diet or a group fast. Richard Foster comments in his book *The Celebration of Discipline* that fasting is at the heart of worship. We give something up to demonstrate our love for God and our dependence on Him first and foremost. Foster also notes that fasting is a useful tool in personal discipleship as it is often when our comfort is removed that the negative sides of our character are revealed. Fasting is not a command but a very flexible and encouraged discipline and can be adapted to all sorts of situations.

Why should we fast? Because...

- ◇ Jesus expects us to fast (Matt 6:16-18) and suggests that there are answers to prayer we will be unable to get without fasting (Matt 17:21)
- ◇ The Bible is full of it – Esther, Anna, Cornelius, Paul, Daniel, Ezra and David all fasted
- ◇ The early church practised it (Acts 13:3)
- ◇ Revival breakthroughs today, particularly in Latin America and Africa, see fasting as essential.
- ◇ Roger Forster says that fasting drains away unbelief (and then the Word of God builds our faith).

What should we expect to see happen through fasting?

Fasting is not a 'cure all' for all our spiritual struggles or a short cut to a happy, problem-free life. It is a weapon in our walk and warfare as Christians. We fast to intensify our connection with God and improve our communication so prayer is more effective. It humbles us and brings us to an awareness of our need of God. It renews the sense of balance and priority in our walk with God. It heightens our spiritual sensitivity and clears the channels of communication with God. It clears the ground for greater spiritual breakthrough in our lives and the lives of those we come into contact with.

Random acts of kindness

Be aware of the situations where you can bless someone else with your actions. These often come up spontaneously, so be ready!!

Give acts of kindness a go:

- Do your housemates washing up
- Treat the people you work with for lunch
- Send a friend chocolates or flowers anonymously
- Pay for the coffee of the person behind you in the queue
- Leave a box of biscuits next to a sleeping homeless person.
- Be accountable with others, share ways you've found to bless people.
- Carry around a Mars Bar in case some one comes up to you asking for food;
- carry an extra fiver around in case you can pay for someone else anonymously.

This is an easy way of making prayer practical and seeing it make a difference. It moves our intercession away from empty words and into a call to action. The whole point of these random acts of kindness is that they are often small things that only one other person will notice