Breakthrough — Delivery Transcript

Matthew 6:16–18 (CSB) · Wes Terry · Sunday, March 27, 2022 · *21 Days: Fast & Pray*

Watch or listen: Subsplash (video & audio) · YouTube

> ⚠️ ***AUTO-GENERATED TRANSCRIPT — verify against the audio before quoting publicly.*** *Produced from a Descript transcription of the Broadview Church sermon recording and lightly cleaned (filler words removed, obvious mis-hears of names and Scripture references corrected). No timestamps. The posted recording is the same service as the YouTube livestream linked at the start of the message (the Contemporary Service livestream). Scripture readings follow the CSB, which Wes was reading from in 2022. This is not a publication-ready manuscript and it is not Wes's exact words for print. Check any line against the recording before it goes on a graphic, in an email, or in a book.*

All right. Thank you, Josh and team, for leading us in worship. They did a terrific job. And if you have your Bibles, you can open them to two places actually. We're going to be in Matthew chapter 6, if you want to turn there. Matthew's the first gospel in the New Testament. So get to the New Testament, get the first book, and you'll find Matthew. We're going to be in Matthew chapter 6. And then we're actually going to have two passages in the Old Testament this morning. You say, Wes, you know where the Old Testament is.

I said, I do know where the Old Testament is. I don't preach out of it very often. Probably should do a little bit more of that, but we're going to look at first Chronicles chapter 14 and 2 Chronicles chapter 20. And already you probably can tell it's going to be a little bit different than what we typically do. So if you're new to our church, typically we have a book of the Bible that we work through chapter by chapter, line by line. That way if you don't like the sermon, you know I'm not picking on you.

We're just going to whatever's next. And for whatever crazy reason, we've been going through the book of Revelation in our church since last Easter sometime. But we've pressed pause on that to do something different leading up to Easter. And today is the beginning of a 21-day season of prayer and fasting. And so we're just calling it 21 days of prayer and fasting. Which isn't very creative, but that's what we're going to do for the next 21 days starting today. And some of you will do total fast, some of you will pick different tracks but I wanted to just kind of share from the heart this morning.

So I don't have a singular text, it's not our steady diet of expositional teaching and preaching. I'm just going to share from my heart why I believe the Lord's calling me as your pastor to call you to participate in this twenty-one days of prayer and fasting. And I sincerely pray that

at the very minimum you will prayerfully consider whether or not this is L is something the Lord wants you to do. Much more so praying that you will actually engage in the fast and that the Lord will rise raise up I'm praying for at least a hundred but a hundred people who will commit themselves for the next twenty one days to pursuing the Lord and creating intentional pain in their life to express to the Lord their dependency and need for him for this season.

Before we get too much further into that discussion, I need to define fasting because there's been a resurgence of fasting, but not by the Christian community. The Christian fasting as a spiritual discipline has kind of fallen out of favor in the last couple hundred years. It used to Christians would fast as part of their normal everyday spiritual exercise, kind of like going to church and giving your tithe. You would fast on a regular basis. Martin or not Martin Luther, John Wesley, who was the founder of Methodism, he wouldn't even hire a pastor unless they fasted at least two days a week.

And so it's kind of like a stable diet. That's fallen out of favor for whatever reason. But there has been an increase in interest in fasting by the health and wellness community. Those health nuts you read on watch on YouTube or whatever, there's all kinds of resurgence on fasting because of these supposed health benefits. And it's really interesting if you want to look into all that, you know, there's all kinds of chemical reactions that happen when you starve yourself and it really is pretty fascinating what the body does to itself to reset itself.

But that's not what we're doing. That's not why we're doing it. It has nothing to do with health and wellness. It's a spiritual decision for a spiritual goal. And so if I was going to give a biblical definition of fasting, I would say fasting is the voluntary deprivation of something physically necessary for the sake of something spiritually important. Biblical fasting is a voluntary act of physical deprivation for a spiritual purpose. And every word in that definition is important. It's got to be voluntary, okay? Don't do this because someone's forcing you to do it.

Don't even do this because you feel like there's pressure from me on you to do this or other people in the church to do this. It's got to be voluntary. It's got to be deprivation. All right. So don't fast from broccoli and brussels sprouts if you hate broccoli and brussels sprouts, which who would actually brussels sprouts I'm kind of I guess because I'm getting old, I kind of like 'em now. But typically I would not have a craving for broccoli. And brussels sprouts unless it had a lot of butter on it.

But that would not be a deprivation. Okay, so you want to deprive yourself from something physically necessary, like fasting from food altogether, will create hunger pain in your life. Or fast from enough of something that it creates pain. And then the final thing is it's for a spiritual purpose. That's the most important thing. You're not doing this to lose weight. Or to reset your body's chemistry. You're doing this for the Lord for a spiritual purpose that you

might gain a cr a new understanding of him or renewed dependency on him or his presence in your life in a new way.

And if I had to sum up the one word I would use to sum up why we′re doing this fast as a congregation. And why I′m doing it personally, th I think the word I would use is breakthrough. And I debated whether or not to use that word because it′s got some negative baggage associated to it. And you may think, well are you saying that we′re that we′re s stalled out or that we′re not where we need to be. In s in some ways there′s some truth to that. But what I mean by breakthrough is basically engaging in this fast with an awareness that there is a brokenness in our world today.

It′s not unique to our generation. It′s been in the world since Adam and Eve, but there is this brokenness in our world. That forms a layer of spiritual malaise that actively works against what God wants to do in your life and in our church. It′s just the way of things. This world is not the way it′s supposed to be, where we′ve deviated from God′s design, and that has put this film of spiritual malaise over everything, including our relationship with God in the context of a local church. And you know this because if you′ve ever had a season of your life where you just kind of coasted.

Or drifted spiritually, and you′ve just kind of disengaged from pursuing the Lord intentionally or having a plan, you end up coasting to a place you don′t want to be. For many people, they end up out of church, out of fellowship with the Lord, out of fellowship with God′s people, enslaved to sins and things that they never thought they would be doing. Not because they intentionally decided to do that. It wasn′t some big grievous failure. It was just long enough time living in this broken world without an intentional pursuit of God that malaise will supplant what God wants to do.

In your heart. And because of that, there are seasons in our life and in our life together as a church where we need to seek the Lord for breakthrough. Where we need to say to the Lord, The malaise is as present. There is a pull on my heart to drift back to a place I don′t want to go. So Lord, would you help me? Experience a breakthrough. And you can experience this need for a breakthrough in a lot of different areas. It doesn′t just have to be spiritually. You′ve probably felt this in terms of maybe a relationship we′ve you had with your children.

Or with your spouse, it had kind of reached a limit, a ceiling on its intimacy and growth, and you needed a breakthrough. And then maybe it was a weekend or a conference or some Date night you had it just super special and then boom you shot through the roof. Or maybe it was in your workplace, or how many of you are gym rats? Any gym rats out there? All right, finally a service with gym rats in it. You know when you′re on that bench press and you′re and you did the 250, you′ve blown past that, then you got stalled at it 280, you got stuck on that.

Finally you get to that 300 and you're stuck. It's a $300 bench press. Nope, a 300-pound bench press. You keep on trying for it. And then finally you break through and it's just this wonderful feeling. That's what we're talking about. But in terms of a spiritual breakthrough. And the n the reason we need it now more than ever is because our culture is sick and getting sicker. I don't think anybody would disagree that their that the world has been totally upended over the last couple of years. We can feel a kind of seismic shift taking place under our feet.

The world, or at least Western culture, used to have some semblance of cultural Christianity or cultural religion. That is gone. We are in a post-Christian culture. Even Abilene, Texas, which was once deemed the buckle of the Bible Belt. Even here it is growing more and more godless in its orientation. And what godless people in our culture should experience when they enter into a church like ours is not a watered-down version of the same, but they should see something different. We're called as Christians to counter the culture, to offer something better, to offer an alternative, so that as the culture is driven by anxiety or anger or whatever the case may be, you come into a church and you feel and you see people that are not driven by anger and anxiety, but they're driven by peace and faith.

They're not disengaged or disenchanted or cynical, but they are full of faith and hope and love. And when god when godless people or people, unchurch people in our culture come into a church like ours and they experience that kind of thing, then you see supernatural transformation take place. You see true revival take place. But for us to be those kind of people and for this church to be that kind of church we've got to have breakthroughs. From time to time we need the Lord to give us a breakthrough, to wake us up, to shake us a little bit, and tell and paint a picture of a better future, a more preferred future of where God will move in a greater and greater way.

Way. If you're taking notes, I would just define a breakthrough as a sudden, dramatic, and important advance, the opposite being a setback or a stalemate. So if you think, do I need to break through, I think the best way to answer that question is to ask yourself whether or not you are plateaued or have experienced a setback. Or do you feel like your life is just kind of stagnant right now? Like I'm just kind of coasting. Nothing, nothing necessarily bad, nothing all that to worry about. But nothing very exciting either.

A kind of plateau. Maybe it's because of a decision that you've got to make and you feel absolutely paralyzed because you don't know what to do. You've you've got no great options, a couple of good options, but you don't know which one is best. That can put you in a position where you need a breakthrough. Maybe you feel absolutely overwhelmed because of a problem that you're trying to solve and you don't have the resources that you need, you don't have the people that you need, you don't you feel under valued, under-resourced and impoverished and so you need a breakthrough.

If that's true of you personally, then you can resonate with what happens spiritually, not just in your life, but in our life together as a whole. And so we need to seek the Lord. For a breakthrough. And there's two things you need to know about that. If you're someone who says, I want a breakthrough in my life or I want to be part of what God does in giving a breakthrough to our church the two things that I'm going to show you in Scripture that always precede breakthroughs are number one, an intentional pursuit of God for the breakthrough.

You've got to intentionally pursue the Lord, otherwise it won't happen. Because breakthroughs don't happen by accident. You know this intuitively. If you've ever you needed to lose some weight or needed to get in shape, you can get up every morning, look yourself in the mirror, and go, that ain't good. You know you need to lose a little bit of weight. And you can do that every single morning. Wake up, look in the mirror, and not one pound drops off your body. Anybody testify? Testify. Not one pound. It's not until you intentionally pursue a little bit of change in your diets and you're working out patterns and all that stuff that the change begins to happen.

So it they do not happen by accident. You do not drift into a breakthrough. Whether it's in your marriage or in your relationship with God, relationships don't work that way. You've got to pursue it, number one. The second thing you need to know about breakthroughs is they are almost always preceded by a season of pain. I hate to be the bearer of bad news, but this is almost always the case. I'm going to show you this in the scripture. It's true in my life. Breakthroughs are preceded by pain. People don't wake up when they see the light, they get moving when they feel the heat.

Right? You can know what you need to do. It's you even health wise, some of you go talk to your doctor, your doctor's been giving you the same advice and you knew it was the right advice, but it wasn't until he told you've only got a couple of years left to live if you don't make some changes. Well now you feel the heat. Now you feel some pain. It's when pain, when God introduces, and this is why God introduces pain into our life to set us up for a breakthrough. They don't happen automatically and they are not pretty before they happen.

But it's one of the best things that God can do in your life, and one of the best things He will do for our church. And so I want to show you two examples in the Old Testament and then I'm going to look at Jesus' teaching in the New Testament so we know how to do this well. The first example is king David. The second example is King Jehoshaphat. How would you like to have his name? King David, King Jehoshaphat. Both of them kings of Israel. Alright. So think Old Testament, nation of Israel.

Think if our church was a nation. That's kind of the dynamic. There was a political dynamic as well as a spiritual dynamic. And at this point in 1 Chronicles chapter 14, David has become king, he has killed Goliath, he has become the political ruler. Things are going well in his

reign. But like a lot of times in life when things are going the way they're supposed to go, it's not long before everything hits the fan. And you got problems to deal with. And that's what happens in David's life. The Philistines get word that David had become king.

Remember the Philistine army? You remember Goliath, David and Goliath? Goliath was a Philistine, kind of a big warrior for the Philistines. He had a he had sh totally shamed Goliath. Kill knocked him out with a little bit of rock and cut his head off, right? That's the non-kid version. But he cuts his head off, brings shame to the Philistine army. Well the Philistine army gets word that David is king. So when he hears that the Philistine army is coming after him, it says in 1 Chronicles chapter 14, verse 10, that David inquired of God.

Before that it says that David went to his fortified place. And so the picture is not David just offering up a quick prayer, but rather David getting in his prayer closet and pounding the throne of heaven, pleading with God, inquiring of God, what do you want me to do? Everything's been going great. Thank you, Lord, for the blessings, but it's all about to be upended and ruined if you don't give me an answer. So here you have a man of God pleading. With the Lord for an answer to his prayer.

Should I attack the Philistines? If I attack the Philistines, will you hand them over to me? And then the Lord answers his prayer. He says, if you'll attack, I'll hand them over to you. Attack and I'll hand them over. So David does just that, and I think it's because David had humbled himself in prayer that he put himself in a position to hear maybe counsel he didn't want to hear, but he acted in obedience anyway, and the Lord broke through. Literally. Look at verse 11 of 1 Chronicles chapter 14. It says the Israelites went up to Baal Perazim, and David defeated the Philistines there.

And then David said, like a bursting flood, God has used me to burst out against my enemies. Therefore they named the place the Lord bursts out. I love that. In fact, some translations will even say, the Lord breaks through. So the big breakthrough in David's life was preceded by a humbling of himself and an inquiring of the Lord. Not just a quick prayer, Lord, what do you want me to do? But a fortified place, a seeking after God, a recognition, Lord, I don't know what to do. Lord, I can't do what needs to be done.

You've got to do it. And so I'm pouring my heart out to you. I'm depending on you to do what only you can do. And the Lord shows up and he breaks through. So much so that they call that place the place where the Lord breaks through. Did you notice that in David's case the breakthrough was preceded by intentional pursuit and a season of pain? He had to pursue the Lord. He got in his fortified place and it was preceded by a season of pain. At least the threat of pain.

Everything was going great, but here comes the threat of pain. He felt the heat and that's what set him up for the breakthrough the second example is king Jehoshaphat. Just like with

David, Jehoshaphat's rule was going great, revival, good fortune. Why not coast on the coattails of that momentum? That's basically what he's doing. But anytime God is blessing, you better believe Satan is supplanting. When Jesus is moving in your life, you also need to know demons are going to follow. Satan is always trying to kill, steal, and destroy, even as Jesus is granting you life.

And life more abundant. That's what's happening in Jehoshaphat's reign. Everything's going great, but Satan is behind the scenes, supplanting and conniving, and he moves in such a way that he creates an opposition force, not of one country against Israel, but of three different countries: the Ammonites and the Shebashites or something like that. I can't ever remember how to pronounce those. Does anybody ever read those weird-sounding countries and just substitute weird names for them. Anybody else ever do that? Like the chicken nuggets and the chicken strips, stuff like that. I used to do that all the time.

But it's not them, it's the Ammonites, the Moabites and the Meunites. So David gets word that all three nations are coming after Israel. Or Jehoshaphat gets word all three nations are coming against Israel. So what does he do? I love this. It's so honest. The first thing he says in chapter 20, 2 Chronicles chapter 20, verse 3, it says, Jehoshaphat was afraid. Anybody say amen to that? A man of God, a leader, didn't have all the answers, didn't know quite what to do. He feels the natural thing everybody would feel when confronted with that kind of pain and suffering, and he got a little bit afraid.

And so just because you feel afraid in your life, just because you feel overwhelmed and incapable, that is not a slight on your spirituality. That does not make you somehow less than human or less Christian. You're just human. That's what humans feel. But notice he doesn't stay afraid. It says he resolved to seek the Lord. That's very important. He feels the fear, but he changes his mind. I'm not going to be conformed to the pattern of the world. I'm going to be transformed by the renewing of my mind. I'm going to seek after the Lord.

And so he begins to pray. And not only does he pray, he also says in verse three of chapter twenty, he proclaimed a fast, not for himself only. Not even for his little church congregation. He proclaims a fast for his entire country. He proclaimed a fast for all of Judah. And they gathered to seek the Lord. They came even from all the cities of Judah to seek him. So from the highest to the lowest, everybody comes and begins to fast. And as a result of that, God breaks through. I want to show you his prayer in chapter 12, or I'm sorry, in chapter 20, verse 12.

I think this is such a perfect model prayer for us. And if you're going to be praying and fasting, this is a model prayer for you for how to experience a breakthrough in your life. Jehoshaphat prays, our God, will you not judge them? This is basically his way of saying, God, I know this is not your design I know what's happening in our culture. I know what's

happening in the life of my child is not what's best for them. It's not what you would want for them. So will you not judge them?

Will you not intervene? Look at this. Because we are powerless before this vast number that comes to fight against us, we do not know what to do, but we look to you. I love that. This is a big problem, Lord. We need a breakthrough that we cannot produce on our own. This is a complication in this relationship that flowers won't fix. This is a this is a hindrance in the workplace I'm not talented enough to overcome. Lord, I can't. I am completely at a loss for what to do in light of this level of a mountain to overcome.

I don't know what to do, but you do, and we look to you. That's what I want our church to pray over the next 21 days. Lord, our you know, our world is upended. It's crazy. There's all kinds of mountains that need to be overcome. We don't know what to do, but you do, and we look to you. And when they do that, the Lord answers their prayer. And he answers their prayer with probably counsel they didn't want to hear. He tells them in chapter 20, verse 17. You do not have to fight this battle, but go fight the battle.

Position yourselves. Stand still and see the salvation of the Lord He is with you, Judah and Jerusalem. So don't be afraid or discouraged. Tomorrow, go out and face them, for the Lord is with you. That's counterintuitive advice. It would have been much easier to tuck your tail and run. Let's make terms of peace. It's three people against one. Even if the Lord's going to fight the battle, that's a pretty big battle to fight no, they don't do that. The Lord tells them, go face them, go fight, know I'm with you, and watch and wait for me to do what only I can do.

Now, I think had they not been praying, had they not been fasting, had they not been totally dependent on the Lord, they would not have been obedient to this request. Had they not been praying, had they not been fasting, had they not been totally dependent on the Lord, I don't know that they would have had the discernment to hear this counsel from the Lord. That's why you fast, that's why you pray, it's to put yourself in a position to hear God's seemingly counterintuitive counsel. But they hear it, not only do they hear it, they respond to it, they go out to the edge of the battle where the valley where they were going to be fighting.

But instead of seeing three armies waging war against them, they see something completely different. Chapter twenty, verse twenty four, he staffs leaders and singers to worship the Lord as they go down to fight, but instead of seeing three armies that were warring against them, they saw only dead corpses lying on the ground. Nobody had escaped. What happened? The Lord had confused the army so that they began to fight against one another. Instead of fighting against Israel, something only God can do, and it took the Israelite army three days to go down and take the booty off of the not literally their booties, but the gold and the armor and the swords and all that war bounty bounty booty booty bounty is what I mean by that.

Took them three days to get it. And they were so amazed, they called that place the place of blessing. Look at it, chapter twenty, verse twenty-six. They assembled in the valley of Baraka, and they called the place where they assembled there on the valley of Barak on the fourth day, for there they blessed the Lord. Therefore that place is still called the valley of Baraka today. That's what I want the Lord to do in our church. That's what I want you to see in your life. I want you to have a thing in your life, a problem, a mountain that you can't overcome.

To pray, to fast, to see the Lord's deliverance in your life, and to say what Satan meant to be a valley of death, the Lord has made a valley of blessing. What looked like an insurmountable task, what looked like something I could not overcome, the Lord broke through. But in their lives, it was preceded by intentional pursuit and a little bit of pain. And what you do when you fast is you invite pain into your life. It's a very morbid thing to do. Why would you starve yourself? You're intentionally introducing pain into your life to tell your body, to tell the Lord I need you more than I need food.

More than the air in my lungs. I need you. I need your presence. I need your wisdom. I need your counsel. And God responds to that kind of prayer. He just does. He always has. He always will. It's how you make your voice known in heaven. Now I want to be very careful. I'm not saying that fasting twists God's arm. I'm not even saying that you should fast in order to cause the breakthrough. Fasting does not cause the breakthrough. Okay, do not get me wrong. God causes the breakthrough only God can decide whether or not He's going to do or not do.

But what fasting does is it puts you and I in a position where we can see the faithfulness of God in a way that we otherwise would not have seen. Fasting puts you in a position where you have greater faith. Fasting puts you in a position where you have greater discernment. Fasting puts you in a decision where you have greater dependency on God. And those are factors that on this formula of spiritual breakthrough, when those things are in place, then the Lord can do things he otherwise wouldn't do. It's when you fast and pray that you're asking with the right motives in the right way that God pours out his favor on your life.

So you don't fast to get You don't fast to twist God's arm. You twist, you fast to find his heart, you fast to put yourself in a position where you can commune with him and ask him the right things in the right way. So if that's what you want in your life, I know that's what I want in my life. If that's what you want for this church, certainly as a member of that, if you're a member of our church, if you're a part of what God is doing here. Then why wouldn't we want something like that for our congregation?

We're living in a crazy world. We're doing some big things. We're about to send people as full-time missionaries, we're right in the process of bringing on a new staff member that is front with all kinds of, you know, who do you hire and how do you hire and what's the right thing to do. Our we've we have this transition of leadership. Our church is getting younger,

our older demographic is transitioning. There's this effort to try to maintain our mission and our vision and our culture and our values. There is this inertia that every church our size feels of pulling us towards a place of comfort.

And compromise and let's just enjoy the strength that already exists. Let's not rock the boat, let's not let's not do anything too crazy, let's not believe God for anything too big why why would you sacrifice something better that God wants to do if you just put yourself in a position to experience a breakthrough? So if that's what you want, if that's what you want to pray for our church, then you got to do it a certain way. So we're going to look at what Jesus says and then we're going to be done.

Jesus says in Matthew chapter 6. And the Sermon on the Mount, he talks about fasting. Before I read his teaching on fasting, I want to show you something in his life. Before Jesus gives the Sermon on the Mount, he is led by the spirit into the wilderness to be tempted by the devil. And while he's in the wilderness, he fasts for forty days and forty nights. I always love that passage because it says after the forty days and forty nights he was hungry. He leaves the mountain on which he had been fasting or the wilderness where he had been fasting, and in Luke's gospel, in Luke chapter four, verse fourteen, it gives us an insight into the results of Jesus' fast.

I love this. It says that as he left that place, he returned to Galilee in the power of the Spirit. And the news about him spread throughout the entire vicinity. Now you remember at the baptism of Jesus, the Spirit of God descended like a dove. But there's also from this temptation and these forty days of prayer and fasting, there was a special indwelling of the Spirit's power. In Jesus. Remember, Jesus was fully God, but he was also fully man. When he performed his miracles on this earth, he performed them as a true man.

I don't think he cheated by leaning in on his divinity. He trusted the Lord. He was indwelled with the Holy Spirit, and it was through his spirit-empowered life that the Lord moved in him and created the miracles that he created. And a lot of that beginning of his ministry, the duration of his ministry, maybe would not have been what it had been had he not prayed and fasted. Because it was those 40 days of prayer and fasting that enabled him to be filled with the power of the Spirit. So if you want power in your life, there is a connection between seasons of fasting and spiritual power.

There's a connection. In our life, we want the power of God in our church. You want the power of God in your life. There's a connection between spiritual power and fasting. But it's got to be done in the right way and for the right reasons. So, what is that? That's what Jesus talks about two chapters later in the Sermon on the Mount. Jesus, and we read this just a minute ago, Jesus said, when you fast, don't be gloomy like the hypocrites. They love to make their face unattractive so that their fasting is obvious to people.

Truly I tell you, they have received their reward. So here's what's going on. These religious leaders, these Pharisees, they would usually fast two days a week. They would fast Mondays and Thursdays, because those were the days that the normal people went into the market. They would not bathe, they would have incredible B. O. As the king James would say, they stinketh quite a bit. And so when normal average people would walk by, it would be like an attack on their nostrils and they'd think, oh my lands, that guy stinks. Have you ever been in the presence of a very stinky person?

The there's just no words. I mean it's just rank, terrible odor. They would walk past those people and they go, whoa, you must be a man of God, dude. You must be a very spiritual person to do that to yourself. So that's what these religious leaders were doing. And Jesus says they're not doing it for God. They're doing it to be seen. They're not doing it from a place of humility and dependency. They're doing it from a place of ego, pride, and arrogance. Don't fast like that now he says at verse 17, when you fast, put oil on your head and wash your face.

Take a shower, stop stinking up the room, so that your fasting isn't obvious to others, but only to your Father who is in secret. In other words, it's not a matter what other people think, it matters what God's thinking. And your father who sees in secret will reward you. So Jesus says there's a right way to fast and there's a wrong way to fast. The wrong way to fast is like the religious leaders were doing. Their fasting was motivated by pride, not humility, and it was muddied with pretense, hypocrisy. They were presenting themselves in one way, but they were really, their agenda was a different thing.

And so if we're going to fast the way Jesus wants us to fast, we've got to reject an ego thing. It can't be about twisting God's arm. It can't be about being seen in a certain way. It's not about us. It's got to be motivated by humility, dependency, desire. Lord, I can't, I don't know what to do. But you do, and I'm relying on you. That's the right way. So he prohibits pride and pretense and he promotes secret fasting. And what he means by secret fasting, I don't think he means nobody can know about it.

Don't even tell your wife. He's just saying don't do it to be seen by people. That's not your motivation. Who cares what they think or don't think? Do it for your Father in heaven. Secret fasting is only for him because it's in the secret place. It's in that prayer closet. It's in that private time with the Lord. Who who cares about all the other stuff you got going on in your life? If you're going to be committing yourself to prayer and fasting, you're bolstering that time. You're bolstering that relationship in the secret place.

And when you fast in a secret way motivated by humility and meant for God and God alone, then you'll receive the reward. And what's the reward? The reward is God Himself. The reward is the presence of God in your life in a way that you've never experienced it before. The reward is contentment. The reward is peace that surpasses human understanding. The

reward is God doing things in others that you thought you could never see happen before. The reward is the power of God. And he may change your circumstances. He may create a literal breakthrough.

Just like David, just like Jehoshaphat, he'll win the war, he'll confuse the armies, external consequences. Maybe he will, but even if he doesn't. Just like Shadrach, Meshach, and Abednego, even if he doesn't rescue us from the fire, we're going to trust him. Because he is good. And if he's with us, even if I have to go through the valley low, I'm not going through it without everything that I need. Because if I have him, I have everything that I need. And imagine living a life in that way. And our culture, broken as it is, our challenges, as daunting as they are, when we have God in our life, the fullness of the Spirit of God in our life, then we have everything that we need.

So that's how to do it. Reject pride and pretense. Embrace secret fasting for God alone, and you'll receive the reward. So having established the fact that fasting is an intentional introduction of pain into our life. Because we know that breakthroughs must be preceded by intentional pursuit and a season of pain. And having established that we're not doing this to be seen by people or to twist God's arm. We're doing this to draw near to God and receive the gift of God Himself. If that's the way God is calling you to fast and if that's the attitude with which you're willing to approach these 21 days, then I want to sh tell you the three things I'm praying for, and I shared them last week.

I'm praying for God to give us wisdom and clarity. For how to for how to live or how to address what's next. I'm praying for spiritual power in our worship services and in our church ministries. And I'm praying that God would grant us a fresh seed of faith to trust Him for something new. We don't have a lot of time, so I'm not going to get to unpack them maybe like I want to, but I want to just a little bit tell you what I mean by those things. When I talk about wisdom and clarity, you might resonate with this in your life as an individual.

Maybe you've got a big decision you've got to make. You got a transition in your job. You don't know what's right, what's wrong. Maybe there is a thorny relationship problem and you don't know how to fix it. So you can pray this for yourself as an individual, but when I talk about praying for wisdom and clarity as a church, all I mean by that is we are our world got turned upside down a couple of years ago everything's different. I think everybody can sense that there are seismic shifts taking place under our feet.

The whole world feels like it's going crazy. How then should we live? The psalmist says in Psalm 1— Psalm 11, verse 3, when the foundations are destroyed, what can the righteous do? How do I live? How do we move forward, Lord? What do I do with my children? How do I strengthen my marriage to face some of the things that we're going to be facing? Give us wisdom and clarity. The example for this, if you want to do a little homework, is Daniel in Daniel chapter 6 and in Daniel chapter 10.

The Babylonian Empire, a godless empire, they overtook Israel. They captured Israelite boys and girls. So here's a Jewish boy, a someone trying to live a godly life in a godless culture. How did he do it? Prayer and fasting. Read it, Daniel chapter 6, Daniel chapter 10. He resolved to pray and fast, and the Lord gave him wisdom it's a fascinating story. I wish we had more time to develop it, but God will answer the prayer for clarity and wisdom if we'll fast and pray. The second one very quickly is spiritual power in our worship gatherings and church ministries.

We've already seen this with Jesus before he began his ministry, a season of 40 days of prayer and fasting. I believe God's best days for Broadview Baptist church can be ahead. I believe we can see incredible, incredible manifestations of the power of God. If we will have faith to believe him for it and if we will have a humble, dependent spirit to say, we don't care what we're able to do, we only want what you can do. And that's the temptation of being a church like this church, where we've got a big budget and a nice building and talented staff, and we can have we can produce a worship service.

That no one would question whether or not we were a healthy church. It was the music was awesome, the message was helpful. My kids had a blast. I'm going to keep going to church here. But we never experienced the power of God and we're why why are we even here? You can get better preaching on podcasts. I'll give you a couple guys you can listen to. You can get you can get good music anywhere, you know. It's what we could have here that could not be experienced anywhere else at home on podcasts is a manifestation of the power of God Conversion, transformation, repentance, reconciliation of relationships, true transformation.

And we won't see it if we don't pray for it. So a prayer for a demonstration of God's power. And then finally, a new seed of faith. A fresh seed of faith to trust God for something new. Again, our church is 60-something years old. We've seen incredible successes in our church. It's tempting to sit on our laurels and enjoy the successes of the past and talk about the glory days. And we could do that and go another 30, 40 years, and everybody'd be happy. But the Lord's doing a new thing because it's a new day.

And certainly we need the Lord to do something new in our day because our the world's going crazy. But the only way we're going to see that new thing happen here is with a fresh seed of faith. And that seed of faith can be planted through things like prayer and fasting. There's a connection between faith and fasting. I don't have time to talk about the whole story, but if you'll go and look at Mark chapter 9, in Mark chapter 9, there's this demon-possessed boy that the disciples can't cast out the demon.

And so the dad brings the demon-possessed boy to Jesus and he says, Your disciples couldn't cast out the demon. Do you think you could cast out the demon? He actually says, if you can do anything, have compassion on us and help us. And Jesus says, if I can, everything's possible for the one who believes. And the guy says, I believe. Help my unbelief. In other

words, give me faith, Lord. And so the Lord heals the boy, the boy is miraculously cured. What's fascinating is the disciples come in verse 28 and 29.

They say, how come we couldn't cast out the demon? And look at this response. This kind only comes out by prayer and fasting. In other words, there's a connection between your experience of power. And you're positioning yourself in a place of prayer and fasting. There's a connection between faith and believing God for something incredible, and you positioning yourself to hear from God and draw near to God through prayer and fasting. The disciples knew how to cast out demons, just like we know how to have church. But there were certain manifestations of power, there were certain demonstrations of God's faithfulness.

That needed a little bit extra, a little bit more, and that's what we can experience through committing ourselves to these twenty-one days. And so again, I'm not saying we twist God's arm. I'm not saying it's voodoo or magic or anything like that. I'm saying it's an opportunity for us to say to the Lord, I don't know what to do. We can't, but you can, and we're looking to you and we need you. And if you can pray that prayer in your life, and if you're willing to join your brothers and sisters in this church family, so we can pray that prayer together, I think it would be incredible what we could see the Lord do in our midst.

And so as the ushers come down and we prepare to take the Lord's Supper, the Bible cautions us from taking it in an unworthy manner. And so before you make a commitment to do this, before you take the Lord's Supper, I want you to spend some time praying and reflecting on what the Lord would have you to do. If you're here this morning and you're not a Christian, fasting is not going to make you a Christian. You've got to repent of your sin and trust in Jesus for salvation. And from that place you live a life of obedience.

But the altar's open, I'd be happy to talk with you about that decision if the Lord leads. Father, we thank you for this time. I just thank you for such clarity in the scripture about what fasting is and what it isn't. And we don't want to do this the wrong way. Just like we don't want to take the Lord's Supper in an unworthy manner, we don't want to commit to these 21 days just to do it. Or just because other people are doing it. We want to do it because it's something you're prompting us to do by your spirit.

And I believe that you are. And so would you give us wisdom and clarity? To know what to do, would you manifest your power even now, even now as we respond? Would you move it as only you can do. Would you move in our church? Would this be a pivotal moment, a pivotal season where things change in their direction and we change in our posture of what we believe you can do and what you will do and what you are doing. Because we've put ourselves in a position to experience your blessing and your faithfulness.

And then would you give us that new seed of faith, first-generation faith, faith that believes you for something new. We don't complain about changes from the past. Faith that

embraces sacrifice instead of shirking responsibility. Faith that is afraid of holding anything back instead of a fear of failure. Would you give us that new seed of faith as we humble ourselves and we start this process of seeking after your will for our life and our church? And we pray these things in Jesus′ name. Amen.