

National Solemn Assembly

Facilitators Kit

THE GATHERING

A NATIONAL SOLEMN ASSEMBLY

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FACILITATOR'S KIT

ROAD TO THE GATHERING

*A PLANNING KIT FOR CHURCHES PARTICIPATING IN
THE NATIONAL SOLEMN ASSEMBLY*

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This kit is prepared for the pastor or other spiritual leaders(s) who will be directing your church's solemn assembly.

The "nuts and bolts" of this special 21-day preparation are detailed in the accompanying Facilitator's Guide. If your church has a person in charge of education, he or she might be the logical person to facilitate the upcoming activities.

The purpose of this Leader's Guide is to give the pastor some biblical "fodder" for the messages that are a key part of the solemn assembly. To that end, this guide contains four sections from Dr. Evans: **Solemn Assembly, Kingdom Agenda, Experiencing a National Revival and Notes on Fasting.**

We pray that God will use these studies to help you, pastor, in preparing your own heart, and the hearts of your people, for a mighty moving of God in your church and community.

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SOLEMN ASSEMBLY

Revivals and awakenings do not just happen. Rather, they are first conceived in people's hearts, then fed through prayer and fasting which give birth to the organization of and call for local and collective solemn assemblies—thus giving way to lasting transformation.

It is time for a birth like this in our land beginning in the church. The apostle Peter wrote,

"For it is time for judgment to begin with the household of God; and if it begins with us first, what will be the outcome for those who do not obey the gospel of God? And if it is with difficulty that the righteous is saved, what will become of the godless man and the sinner?"

- 1 PETER 4:17-18

Whenever a solemn assembly or sacred gathering was called in Scripture, it was often called by those in leadership—whether it was a priest, prophet or king. Oftentimes it would first be called for a specific smaller leadership sphere before spreading to the entire nation.

Even in America, our historical records verify that prior to every national awakening, the spiritual leadership of the day placed a heavy emphasis on fasting and gathering for times of solemn assemblies, typically in smaller groups that led to larger gatherings.

These times of revival and refreshing from the Lord were experienced by people who weren't satisfied with yesterday's blessings. There's nothing wrong with yesterday's blessings, but this solemn assembly, this call to fasting and prayer, is for those who are asking God to show them something more.

It's much like playoff time in the sports world. When it comes time to seek the championship, what was accomplished during the season is suddenly not sufficient. It was great that your team won enough games to make the playoffs, but now they need to show you something more, something new. For me, a solemn assembly is "playoff week" with everything on the line.

Through the discipline of fasting, your spiritual sensitivities and those of your people will be heightened and intensified because what normally takes up a good part of your day and your focus will be denied—set aside in search of a greater spiritual breakthrough with the Lord. You will be more in tune with God because you'll be less distracted with man.

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Sometimes we don't get around to hearing much of what God wants to do with us and say to us. There are too many distractions with telephone and the television. There are too many people talking about everything else, so we miss the still, small voice of the Holy Spirit who is longing to let us know what God wants.

The solemn assembly is designed to mute these noises and distractions so God can speak to us, having gained our uninterrupted attention.

I want to add two sections here that I believe will be helpful to you as you pray, study the Word and seek the Holy Spirit's guidance in preparing for your solemn assembly. They are some thoughts on the kingdom agenda, and on the importance of national renewal.

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THE KINGDOM AGENDA

The kingdom agenda is *the visible manifestation of the comprehensive rule of God over every area of life*. It is a reminder that we, as followers of Jesus Christ, belong to another realm. Our allegiance is to another order, and no matter where we live, work or travel, we are citizens of God's kingdom.

The unifying theme of Scripture is the glory of God through the advancement of His kingdom in history. It was designed to give mankind the responsibility of both becoming kingdom disciples and making kingdom disciples, thus mirroring God's image and rule on earth. That is still God's goal even though sin has distorted His original design. His kingdom goal, however, could only be reached as people operated under His authority. And it is to be reached in each of His four covenantal spheres of engagement: individual, family, church and society.

A covenant is a spiritually-binding relationship established by God, having its own requirements and promises. As each of these covenants operates underneath God's authority, God's transforming presence and power are made manifest through them. Conversely, as His divinely designed covenants operate independently of His authority, chaos replaces order. What we are experiencing today is the refusal of mankind to comprehensively recognize and reflect His will on earth "as it is in heaven."

One reason we don't take our outreach and influence responsibilities more seriously in our nation is because we don't fully understand the message of the kingdom. As a result, this has caused much, if not most, of the confusion in our churches,—not because people don't speak of the kingdom, but because far too much of their speech is in esoteric, theological "code words" that seem unrelated to the realities of life in the here-and-now.

The absence of a comprehensive understanding of the kingdom has led to a deterioration in our world of cosmic proportions. People live segmented, compartmentalized lives because they lack a kingdom worldview. Families disintegrate because they exist for their own fulfillment rather than for the kingdom. Churches are having a limited impact on society because they fail to understand that the goal of the church is not the church itself but the kingdom. This myopic perspective keeps the church divided, ingrown, and unable to transform the cultural landscape in any significant way.

And because this is so, society at large has nowhere to turn to find solid solutions to the perplexing challenges that confront us today—troubling problems such as crime, racism, poverty and a myriad of other ills which continue to show up in our politics and policies in voting booths year after year. Yet for each and every issue, God's kingdom agenda provides an alternative, another way to see and live life in this world. It transcends the politics of men and offers the solutions of heaven.

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Throughout the Bible, the kingdom of God is His rule, His plan, and His program. God's kingdom is all-embracing. It includes a ruler, kingdom subjects, the kingdom's realm and its regulations or guidelines that govern the relationship between the ruler and the subjects.

At the heart of the kingdom agenda philosophy is the fact that there should never be a separation between the sacred and the secular. All of life is spiritual since all of life is to come under God's rule. Therefore, every issue—whether social, political, economic, educational, environmental or other—is to mirror God's principles related to the specific area and thus reflect and promote His agenda in history.

God has made Jesus Christ the sovereign over all of mankind's kingdoms (Matthew 28:18, Colossians 1:13-18). His rule is to be represented in history by those who are a part of His kingdom and who have been delegated the responsibility of dispensing His rule to the nations (Matthew 28:19, Ephesians 1:22-23). Christian living and influence should be reflective of this reality.

Colossians 1:13 says that everybody who has trusted the Lord Jesus Christ as Savior has been transferred from the kingdom of darkness to the kingdom of his beloved Son. If you are a believer in Jesus Christ, your allegiance has been changed. You are no longer to follow the world's ways, but Christ's.

The problem in our society today is that too many people are looking for "salvation by government." They are looking to force God's hand, way and will into the box of elected officials. They want a kingdom they can schedule, program and understand, thus putting their hope in the political realm. But God warns us what happens when we put our confidence in kings (1 Samuel 8:9-18). There is no such thing as salvation by government (Judges 8:22-23).

Therefore, what we need in our nation today is a radical, comprehensive, covenantal return to the God of the Bible—our true and only Savior. This can be initiated through a collective national solemn assembly in which we seek revival in each of the four covenantal spheres.

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EXPERIENCING NATIONAL RENEWAL

Over the years and even in the last decade, we have had localized gatherings of believers seeking God's face in order to invoke His hand of involvement in our nation. People have met in cities, churches and homes to call on God and to access heaven's intervention in our nation.

Many, if not most, of these gatherings lasted one night, one Sunday, or perhaps two Sundays back-to-back. Yet in the busyness of the American lifestyle, it is easy for these experiences to be lumped into another long list of good things to do, and as a result, lose the collective impact they were intended to have.

Likewise, because many, if not most, of these gatherings were segmented by denomination, church or location, we did not experience renewal on the greater level that it is so desperately needed.

Have we gathered as groups to seek God's face in our land? Yes. Have we met in churches every so often and scattered across our nation to seek revival? Yes. But have we ever done this collectively and comprehensively with unity from our nation's spiritual leaders? No.

Have we truly experienced God's hand of national revival in the last century?

If we are, as His people, going to seek His face, we will need to set aside personal agendas, organizations, denominations, structures and the like, and come together once and for all as the body of disciples whom Christ died to procure, and call on the name of our great God and King.

It is time to set our preferences and platforms aside and go before the Lord as one body. It is also time for more than an evening event or Sunday morning assembly. It is time for a comprehensive season of seeking our Lord's hand and face in our great land. One of the ways to do this is to focus an entire segment of time—whether that be a week or several days—on each of the four covenantal areas of God's involvement with humanity.

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NOTES ON FASTING

Eating is one of the fundamental activities of life. But it's more than just survival; most people also derive pleasure from the good food and good fellowship that surround many of our meals.

But every so often, something comes up that is more important than our next meal. It could be a major project at work that has to get done now, or a mom who is so distracted taking care of her kids that she forgets to eat.

THE PRINCIPLE OF FASTING

What we oftentimes do without thinking because we are busy or distracted, the Lord asks us to do intentionally when He calls us to fast. Fasting is *the deliberate abstinence from some form of physical gratification, for a period of time, in order to prayerfully pursue a greater spiritual goal*. The second half of this definition is crucial, because fasting without prayer is just a diet. Fasting is your way of telling God that your need for His intervention is so great, and you are so passionate about it, that you are willing to sacrifice your physical needs for the answer.

Jesus made a powerful statement about the importance of the spiritual over the physical when He told His disciples, "I have food to eat that you do not know about" (John 4:32). He was dealing with the spiritual needs of the woman at the well and her entire village, which were far more important to Him than eating the food the disciples had brought Him.

Fasting shows God that our need for Him is greater than our need for food or whatever item it is we choose to abstain from. In Matthew 4:1-11, Jesus went into the wilderness to be tested by the devil. After Jesus prepared by fasting for 40 days, the devil came to Him and tempted Him to eat, but Jesus quoted Deuteronomy 8:3,

"Man does not live by bread alone, but man lives by everything that proceeds out of the mouth of the Lord."

We can't live on food alone because we need the Word of God even more. Fasting shows God and ourselves that His Word is more important than food. When we fast, we give the Holy Spirit our full attention. It leads to a brokenness that shouts, "I can't do this!" The self-sufficient man or woman won't

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fast, but the desperate one will. The self-sufficient family won't fast, but the desperate one will. The self-sufficient church won't fast, but the desperate one will. The self-sufficient nation won't fast, but the desperate one will.

The truth is we cannot live the Christian life in our own strength. We can't make things happen. We can't force a revival simply by strategizing for one. We've got to starve our flesh to feed our spirit. When our spirits are strong and our flesh is weak, huge spiritual breakthroughs occur. Isaiah 58:8-9 promises that when we fast the way God intended, our light will shine, healing will come quickly to our land, and the Lord will answer when we call.

The question is not whether fasting makes a difference. The question is, how badly do we want a difference to be made?

Fasting usually involves setting aside food, although we can fast from any physical appetite, including sex within marriage (1 Corinthians 7:5). Another thing we could fast from are the hours we spend watching television or surfing the Internet. The idea is to devote the time we would ordinarily spend on these activities to prayer and seeking the Lord.

Fasting calls us to renounce the natural in order to invoke the supernatural. When you fast, you say no to yourself so you can hear yes from God in a time of need or crisis. Our nation is in a time of crisis; a collective fast throughout the body of Christ on behalf of our land sends a message to our Lord that we are wanting and waiting to hear from Him.

Fasting is a major principle throughout the Bible. People in Scripture often fasted in situations that demanded a spiritual breakthrough. In Zechariah 7:5-6 the Lord said,

"When you fasted and mourned in the fifth and seventh months these seventy years, was it actually for Me that you fasted? When you eat and drink, do you not eat for yourselves and do you not drink for yourselves?"

Even though the fasts God referred to here would have been unnecessary if His people had repented, these verses still give us an important principle about fasting. When we eat, we eat for ourselves, with nothing more than our own satisfaction in mind. But when we fast, we should do so with God in mind, for His pleasure. When we fast, God says, "This is for Me."

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So often we feed the body while starving the soul. But when we fast, we give the soul a higher priority than the body. We are asking God to interact with our souls with regard to a spiritual matter. The question is, are you willing to give up feeding your flesh for a time in order to gain spiritual riches in your life, church, and in our land?

THE PURPOSE OF FASTING

According to Isaiah 58:4, the purpose of fasting is “to make your voice heard on high.” When we fast with the proper motivation, our voice is heard in heaven. That is, we come into God’s presence in a powerful way. Imagine what would happen if your church came together as a body during your solemn assembly to collectively fast and call on God to intervene in your church and community.

The nature of fasting demands concentrated effort and time to come into God’s presence. Think about the effort we make to eat when we’re hungry. Most of us will make a way where there is no way when it’s mealtime because we are desperate to satisfy our hunger. When we fast, we are desperate to satisfy something much deeper—a spiritual need.

When we fast, God sharpens our spiritual focus so we can see things more clearly. In 1 Thessalonians 5:23, Paul prayed that his readers would be sanctified and preserved in their “spirit and soul and body.” Paul’s order here is purposeful. We are not made up of body, soul, and spirit, but spirit, soul, and body. We are created to live from the inside out, not from the outside in.

You say, “Why is that important?” Because if you look at yourself as a body that happens to house a soul and a spirit, you will live for your body first. But if you understand that you are spirit at the core of your being, you will live for the spirit. If we want to really live, the spirit, or the inner person, must be set free. Our spirits must be cracked open to release the Spirit’s life, and fasting helps us do this.

Far too often, our problem is that we aren’t ready for God to work in our spirit. We make all kinds of resolutions and promises, which are really just ways of saying to God, “I can do this myself.” But if we could do it, we would have already done it.

One of the primary reasons our nation is farther from God today, collectively, than we’ve ever been before is that we have become self-sufficient. We refuse to humble ourselves collectively before the Lord in order to fast and pray and seek His movement in our spirits.

What God wants to hear us say is, “Lord, we can’t do this. We’ve tried everything we know and we can’t fix our lives. Lord, we throw our inability and our failure at Your feet.”

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God says, "Now I can do something."

When we fail to humble ourselves before God, we wind up trying to live the Christian life in our own power. We call on our flesh to help us defeat the flesh—which is a contradiction in terms. Fasting is a tangible way of demonstrating to God that we are setting aside the flesh in order to deal with the spirit.

More than that, fasting is also a way of prostrating ourselves before God. In the Bible, when people were broken before the Lord they often fell on their faces. They put ashes on their heads and tore their clothes as a way of saying, "Lord, I can't do anything. I am at the end of my rope."

God wants us to reach that point so He can demonstrate His power and get all the glory, which He deserves. The apostle James says those who humble themselves before God will be lifted up (James 4:10). Fasting puts us on the path of humility.

The bottom line is when we fast, we will get God's undivided attention:

*"Then you will call, and the LORD will answer; you will cry,
and He will say, 'Here I am'"*

- ISAIAH 58:9A

You may say, "But I've been calling to God all this time." Are you calling to Him with the fast? Remember, fasting makes your voice heard on high. God wants to be treated seriously.

So the passion behind this solemn assembly must be hunger for God. The goal of this time is for your people to know God personally in a powerful new way.

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COVER LETTER TO FACILITATOR

Dear Facilitator,

Thank you for taking a leadership role in helping your church, family or small group hold a solemn assembly. I know the Lord will bless you for your time and commitment.

Together, churches and believers all over the country will be participating in The Gathering in September. The opportunity we have to come together and intercede for our nation is a true blessing. Prior to this, every January for the last several decades, I have led our congregation at Oak Cliff Bible Fellowship in a similar week-long solemn assembly. Now, we will gather ourselves across the country to lift holy voices before God, praying for restoration and revival.

A great number of speakers will be on hand to lead us in prayer. For those attending the event, the doors will open at 6:00 p.m.

Additionally, we have enclosed a Prayer and Fasting Guide to assist your congregation in preparing their hearts and minds for The Gathering. It is a 21-day journey of personalized prayer and fasting, as well as a weekly devotional to assist in providing the proper biblical context for the assembly. Also, we recommend scheduling regular corporate prayer every day at your church so that your body can agree with each other in prayer leading up to the event.

All provided materials in this kit can be customized to help you and your church facilitate a solemn assembly anytime you want. Again, thank you for helping to lead your church, family or small group in seeking the Lord. I pray that it will be a life-changing experience for everyone involved.



Dr. Tony Evans
President, The Urban Alternative

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FACILITATOR'S NOTES

VOLUNTEERS

One vital key to a successful solemn assembly is the team of volunteers you assemble. Depending on the size of your church, these men and women will help with a variety of tasks, which may include:

- Making sure the church is open and ready for the prayer times and other gatherings.
- Helping to assemble individuals or teams for any community visitation you may do.
- Providing water and juices for those fasting as they gather in the various prayer groups during the week (see schedule below).
- Preparing a "Break the Fast" light breakfast at the end of the prayer and fasting period on the day of the solemn assembly. (This could be a church-purchased meal or a potluck.)
- Leading the prayer times for men and women—ideally, godly laypeople who are recognized as spiritually mature.
- Perhaps also playing a role in the worship times.

Other than the prayer leaders, consider challenging people who may not be as active in the church, praying that God will use this event to spark a new fire in their walk with Christ.

Above all, make your volunteer selections a matter of prayer.

ADVERTISING/PROMOTION

We have provided flyers you can use to spread the word about your solemn assembly. These can be used as bulletin inserts at your church, and also as handouts in the door-to-door visitation or other form of community announcement you want to make.

Be sure to encourage all of your church members to leverage all forms of social media to get out the word about your solemn assembly. If your church has a web site and/or Facebook page, create a special section and link to inform people of this event.

Ask your local radio station(s) to air an announcement of your solemn assembly as a public service. Here is suggested copy your pastor or other leader can record and take to the station, or give to the station to be read on-air:

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Hi, this is [name] of the ____ church. I want to invite you to be part of [church event name], starting [date]. We're calling it a solemn assembly—a time to seek the Lord for our community and our nation. Why not join us for a life-changing experience? Call XXX-XXXX for more information, or visit [web site].

Again, depending on the size of your church and community, consider visiting your city or town hall to share the news of your solemn assembly with your local officials, emphasizing the positive impact these events can have on your community.

RESOURCES AND CONSIDERATIONS

If you've never embarked on a fast before, take some time beforehand to consider certain practical considerations. Am I skipping a meal a day? Two meals a day? Nothing but juices for 21 days? Some of your fasting choices might require the advice of your pastor or even your doctor. In other words, plan wisely. For those who are abstaining from other activities, ask yourself who else might be affected from your abstinence? Make sure you and your spouse are on the same page if you choose a sexual fast within marriage. In all your choices, make sure you ask the Lord to guide you in making wise and meaningful sacrifices, and trust that the Lord will sustain you throughout your fast.

Remember, a solemn assembly is a time of desperate calling out to God for His intervention in individual lives, the church, the community, and our nation. For this reason, we recommend you be involved in regularly encouraging participants to take these 21 days seriously. You may even want to implement a Commitment Contract, where people sign in agreement to participate and agree to be held accountable for their commitment.

Print extra copies of the bulletin insert to use in visitation and place in the windows of local businesses as they give permission. You may also want to have the message printed in the form of door hangers if you plan a "blitz" of your neighborhood or larger area of your city.

If your church's budget is limited, you may want to ask the members to provide the cost of a sign or banner at the front of the church calling people to the solemn assembly. Additionally, it is appropriate to take up a special offering or two in advance of the 21-day journey to help augment some of your preparatory costs.

Should you choose to hold a "Break the Fast" meal following The Gathering, take some time to plan where the food is coming from, who is on hand to cook, set up tables, clean up afterward, etc.

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If you are attending the event, consider your transportation needs. Will you be shuttling people via bus or van? Carpooling?

If you are gathering at your local church, make sure you have the ability to project the video presentation on your screen(s) and that all audio/video matters are resolved in advance.

SCHEDULE:

SUNDAY

Morning Service: As directed by the Holy Spirit, the pastor launches the Solemn Assembly with a message on the importance of individual, church, and national revival, God's requirements for this renewal, and a call to the church to fast and pray for God's supernatural intervention (sermon notes/ideas are included in the Leader's Guide).

Evening: If your church has an evening service, we strongly encourage you to set it aside in favor of calling your members to a time of personal prayer, Scripture reading, and soul-searching before the Lord in their homes.

MONDAY

Call the men of the church together for prayer and worship. As the spiritual leaders of their families and God's family, men need to set the example in humbling themselves before the Lord and seeking His face.

One thing to remember: As a general rule, men are more reluctant than women to pray publically. Consider asking one or more men ahead of time to lead out in prayer as an encouragement to others.

TUESDAY

The women of the church come together for corporate prayer. Provide childcare for your single mothers and any other women who may need it.

WEDNESDAY

Many churches now have a midweek preaching service. This is the case at Oak Cliff Bible Fellowship—but we set aside the preaching during the Solemn Assembly to focus on worship, soul-searching, and seeking the Lord's face. We encourage your church to follow this format.

THURSDAY

For this gathering, urge your church members to come together as nuclear or extended families to pray for each other and the strengthening of the family as God's foundational unit of society.

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FRIDAY-SATURDAY

The Friday evening gathering is open to all. This service may culminate your Solemn Assembly, depending on how you decide to schedule the climactic "Break the Fast" light breakfast-style meal.

This can be a late-night meal, or you may choose to come back together on Saturday morning to eat and fellowship. We suggest earlier rather than later for the meal, in light of the fast your people have been observing during the week.

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BULLETIN INSERT

Use or modify in whatever fashion you deem beneficial to help you promote your 21-day journey to The Gathering.

**THE GATHERING: A NATIONAL SOLEMN ASSEMBLY
A TIME OF NATIONAL REVIVAL**

**A Special Time of Prayer, Fasting,
and Seeking the Lord
at [church name]**

*When You said, "Seek My face," my heart said to You,
"Your face, O LORD, I shall seek."
Psalm 27:8*

**Mark your calendars now
and plan to join the
[church name] family
in a life-changing 21-day journey!**

(include specific information pertaining to how you are attending the event)

For more information, call the [church name] at XXX-XXXX,
or visit us online at www.xxxxxx.

You won't want to miss this exciting event!

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A 21-DAY PRAYER AND FASTING GUIDE

"I will not let you go unless you bless me."

- Genesis 32:26

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HOW TO USE THIS GUIDE

We are excited that you have decided to join with us to intercede on behalf of our great nation, offering a prayer of repentance and restoration to God. The next 21 days will be a time of sacrifice, but also a time of anticipation, as we come together in solemn assembly, believing that the presence of God will once again manifest itself throughout our land.

This guide was originally written to help those who plan on participating in our national assembly called The Gathering. The material is designed to allow a church to help its own congregation prepare for their own solemn assembly at any point in the future. It is our firm belief that national restoration comes about because the Christian church determines to stand in the gap for its community, willing to repent on its behalf and see it restored into a right relationship with God. Therefore, we encourage you to use this material to assist your church in holding its own solemn assembly.

We want to offer a quick word on fasting. It is voluntarily going without food—or any other regularly enjoyed good gift from God—for the sake of some spiritual purpose. Even abstinence from sex, whether undertaken by a married couple, in this sense, can be seen as a form of fasting, as long as the goal is spiritual nourishment or enrichment. Matthew 6:16 says, “Whenever you fast, do not put on a gloomy face as the hypocrites do, for they neglect their appearance so that they will be noticed by men when they are fasting.” The point here is that fasting is not optional; the verse says “when-ever,” not “if.” For this reason, we need to take the practice of fasting seriously.

Day 1 is set apart from the rest of the days and should be treated as an introduction to preparing the hearts and minds of your participants. Day 1 seeks to cultivate a genuine and compassionate heart in each individual. It is a short devotion and paves the way for the remaining days. There is no particular fasting requirement on this day, but each participant is welcome to begin a fasting regimen on this day, if they so desire.

Days 2-21 are divided into three week-long segments (2-7, 8-14, 15-21). Each segment has a key verse, a short devotional, a formal prayer, and an individual prayer and fasting chart. The chart is designed to help individuals keep track of specific prayers for each day and to identify the manner in which each individual will fast for that day. Participants should plan to pray daily for particular needs both within their church and within their nation. Ideas for fasting include abstinence from food (for part of the day or for the entire day), internet abstinence, TV watching fasts, or any activity that usually makes demands on the participant’s time. Wisdom should be employed here and participants are encouraged to discuss their fasting ideas with church leadership (or in the case of food fasting, with their doctors).

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A 21-DAY PRAYER AND FASTING GUIDE

DAY 1

DEVELOPING A HEART FOR PRAYER AND FASTING

"Return to Me with all your heart, and with fasting, weeping and mourning; and rend your heart and not your garments."

- JOEL 2:12B-13A

Over the next 21 days, I want you to prepare for something serious. Every four years, the world sends their athletic champions to compete in the Olympics. It might surprise you to know that the host city for that event, selected seven years beforehand, goes through enormous fundraising and planning initiatives in order to put on a world-class competition. These cities plan security, housing for athletes and coaches, tourism strategies, facility construction, transportation concerns, advertising, etc. This is no sports day at the county fair; we take these games very seriously.

So, how do we, as Christians, prepare ourselves for something as serious as a solemn assembly? First, by recognizing the solemnity of such a gathering. The prophet Joel proclaimed an assembly—a gathering of all the elders and inhabitants of the land into the house of the Lord—for the purpose of crying out to Him in repentance on behalf of their nation, which had turned its back on Him. God was preparing the nation for the "Day of the Lord," a time of devastation, where locusts would completely ravage the land. As a warning, He told the people to "rend their hearts, and not their garments," which, put another way, means that God wanted them to assemble not as an empty ritual, but as a response from a repentant heart. This was serious business! So, as we prepare to assemble ourselves on behalf of our nation today, we must recognize the gravity of the situation. Our nation has turned its back on God, and that will always come with consequences.

Second, we must commit ourselves to prayer and fasting. Fasting allows us to change the focus from us to Him. We deny ourselves of things that are self-serving (food, internet, etc.) for a season (an hour, a day, a week, etc.) with the intent of devoting ourselves to prayer and focus on God. Biblical fasting represents the heart of Joel's words. When we take the focus off of ourselves and place it back on God where it belongs, we can appeal to Him on behalf of our nation and ask Him to bring revival to our land.

PRAYER: Lord, create in me a solemn heart. Allow me to see the severity of the situation our country is in. America has turned its back on you and decided to move forward as a nation content to find its way on its own. Many today deny that You even had a part in founding this nation. I ask for the

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strength and the resolve to pray and fast on behalf of this great country. Prepare me for a solemn assembly with my fellow Christians that we might compel the country to turn back to You. In Christ's name, amen.

Take some additional time today to pray that the Lord do a work in your heart. The needs of our country are great, yet we can become callous about the state of things. Ask the Lord to fill you with compassion, that you might be willing to stand in the gap for the nation.

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DAYS 2-7 *WHERE IS YOUR HEART?*

"You ask and do not receive, because you ask with wrong motives, so that you may spend it on your pleasures."
- JAMES 4:3

Where is your heart today?

Imagine your eyes as a built-in video camera and your ears as a connected microphone. From the moment you open them, they begin recording everything you see and hear throughout the day. They document where you go and with whom you interact. They preserve both your proudest and most pitiful moments: the conversation you had with the mailman as you shared the gospel with him, and the unkind words you muttered under your breath against others on the freeway. Every unvarnished moment now lives digitally on some hard drive or video tape for you and others to review and analyze.

It's a pretty scary thought. But even if every hour of your life existed as a recording, it wouldn't be able to definitively tell anyone what's in your heart. Put another way, the things that you do and say throughout the day provide only a glimmer of what goes on inside your heart.

Think about your heart—your emotions, will and mind—as a GPS device in your car. Your physical body presses on the gas pedal or the brake pedal, your hands turn the steering wheel, but the GPS device tells you where you are going. Similarly, your body determines what you do, whereas your heart determines why you do it. For example, while it might seem noble to give money at church, if you do so simply so that others can see how generous you are, such actions are not noble at all.

Our motives matter. In order to experience God's manifest presence in this country once again, the church must gather itself, dedicated to prayer and fasting, repenting on behalf of the nation with a true heart. A solemn assembly is not an empty ritual; it shouldn't be done as though we are just going through the motions. So, as you commit yourself to prayer and fasting these next few weeks, take some time to analyze where your heart is at.

PRAYER: Lord, give me a contrite heart. Fill me with your compassion for our nation, that I might be willing to stand before you on its behalf and pray for national repentance and restoration. Amen.

Fill out the Prayer and Fasting Chart on the next page.

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PRAYER AND FASTING CHART FOR DAYS 2-7

Record your specific prayer requests for your church and for the nation.
Determine how you will fast for each day and for what length of time.

	HOW WILL YOU FAST?	PRAY FOR THE NATION	PRAY FOR YOUR CHURCH
DAY 1			
DAY 2			
DAY 3			
DAY 4			
DAY 5			
DAY 6			
DAY 7			

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DAYS 8-14 *THE HEART OF A PRAYER WARRIOR*

"I searched for a man among them who would build up the wall and stand in the gap before Me for the land, so that I would not destroy it; but I found no one."

- EZEKIEL 22:30

Lawyers get a bad rap these days. They've been called everything from shysters to ambulance-chasers and perhaps, over the years, they've earned a fair bit of that name-calling. But, not all lawyers are crooks; in fact, the vast majority of lawyers today serve the public by representing them in legal entanglements or arguing on their behalf in a court of law. In this sense, a lawyer should be seen as an advocate of those who do not have the means to represent themselves in legal matters.

As Christians, we have an advocate and His name is Jesus Christ. He intercedes on our behalf to the Father, bringing our prayer requests to the throne for consideration. During His earthly ministry, he was a staunch advocate for humanity, and he spent an enormous amount of time praying for His disciples, Jews, Gentiles, etc. He had the heart of a prayer warrior, who understood the unmatched power of bringing the needs of others before God. Also, by praying regularly, Christ provided an example for us to live by, interceding on others' behalf in prayer.

So what does the heart of a prayer warrior look like? First, you need to develop a passion for people and their well-being. Second, you need boldness, to bring the needs of many before the throne of God, believing that God will answer your prayer. Third, you need humility; we would do well to remember that God is sovereign and supreme in every way, and making demands of Him is the wrong approach. Finally, you need discipline to diligently set aside time in your busy schedule to offer up the needs of those who you know and love and also for the nation itself.

So if you feel as though you might not have what it takes to be a prayer warrior, don't feel disheartened; as the verse above implies, few of us do. But we can rely on the Holy Spirit living in us to empower us to do those things that we otherwise wouldn't have the ability to do. So pray that He transforms you into one who is willing to stand in the gap for our country.

PRAYER: Lord, I ask that you guide your Holy Spirit to transform me into a prayer warrior. Give me the passion, the boldness, the humility, and the discipline to stand in the gap for the nation. Amen.

Fill out the Prayer and Fasting Chart on the next page.

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PRAYER AND FASTING CHART FOR DAYS 8-14

Record your specific prayer requests for your church and for the nation.

Determine how you will fast for each day and for what length of time.

	HOW WILL YOU FAST?	PRAY FOR THE NATION	PRAY FOR YOUR CHURCH
DAY 1			
DAY 2			
DAY 3			
DAY 4			
DAY 5			
DAY 6			
DAY 7			

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DAYS 15-21 A SYMPHONY OF PRAYER

"Again I say to you, that if two of you agree on earth about anything that they may ask, it shall be done for them by My Father who is in heaven. For where two or three have gathered together in My name, I am there in their midst."

- MATTHEW 18:19-20

If you have ever been to the symphony before, chances are the caliber of music produced by that group of musicians is likely head-and-shoulders above anything you might hear at a local school or on the street corner. The primary reason for this is that symphonic orchestras employ the brightest and the best of musical talent around. They strive for perfection and quality. They practice longer and harder than anyone else. When one attends a concert, they expect precision and artistic exceptionalism.

Imagine if even just one of the musicians decided that he or she was going to play a different piece of music than everyone else one night. While one hundred trained musicians play Beethoven's Fifth, one lone clarinet belts out the woodwind melody from Ravel's Bolero. The results would be disastrous. Everyone would immediately know that something was wrong, the other musicians would lose their own focus, and a few hundred patrons would be demanding their money back. That's the impact of even just one musician not playing in complete harmony or unison with everyone else.

The verse above has a word for this kind of harmony: "if two of you agree on earth..." (emphasis mine). This word, "agree," in the Greek (*sumphonen*) holds a more nuanced meaning. It means, "to fit together," or even "to match in sound of empty jars that harmonize when knocking against each other." This is from where we get our English word, "symphony." There is a certain beauty of two or more Christians agreeing together as they approach the Father above.

To be in "symphony" with one another is required for our group prayers to reach heaven's ears with one sound. Until we are on the same page with our hearts, minds and actions, in alignment under God's principles, submitted to His authority, our prayers will make as much sense to the Lord as an orchestra does to us when they warm up and not operating under the authority of the conductor. Only when we pray in one accord will we experience the power kingdom prayer was designed to provide.

PRAYER: Lord, I desire to be in union with my other brothers and sisters as we approach your throne in agreement for the restoration of our country. Let our collective voices sound like a symphony to you,

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beautiful and compelling, that we might persuade you to move and act among the people of America once again, Amen.

Fill out the Prayer and Fasting Chart on the next page

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PRAYER AND FASTING CHART FOR DAYS 15-21

Record your specific prayer requests for your church and for the nation.
Determine how you will fast for each day and for what length of time.

	HOW WILL YOU FAST?	PRAY FOR THE NATION	PRAY FOR YOUR CHURCH
DAY 1			
DAY 2			
DAY 3			
DAY 4			
DAY 5			
DAY 6			
DAY 7			

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