

A person with long dark hair, wearing a dark jacket and pants, stands on a path of large, flat, reddish-brown rocks. The person is facing away from the camera, looking out over a vast, flat, reddish-brown landscape under a sunset sky. The sky is a mix of purple, orange, and pink, with a bright sun low on the horizon. The overall mood is contemplative and serene.

SEVEN DAYS

ON FASTING & PRAYER

Nick Serb

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A personal diary for your spiritual journey into fasting and prayer.
This is meant to be an encouragement for the church, to truly seek God with a renewed energy, love and commitment. It is meant to bring joy following brokenness.
It is meant to inspire and give vision to those who have tired on the way.

A booklet to help you rediscover the joy of fasting and prayer!

Nick Serb

Fasting and Prayer @ TC 2020

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“Every great movement of God can be traced to a kneeling figure.”

D.L. Moody

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Acknowledgements

It's important to be grateful

I am always grateful to God for His mercy and grace. There are no words to express how gracious He has been to me. Since I was a child, I knew the Lord had a purpose for me. I never knew it included moving to Northern Ireland, age 25, and becoming the pastor of Transformation Centre.

However, since 2006, I can testify to His goodness and blessing. I have seen the church grow, spiritually and numerically. I have been blessed to see many lives being transformed by the power of God. He has been gracious to give us a vision for the future of His church in Ireland. Our purpose is *"to introduce everyone, everywhere to the transforming power of God, the Gospel."* I continue to look to God for the fulfilment of all His promises regarding the church.

I am grateful to God for my amazing wife Michele and our three children: Abigail, Eliana and Nathanael. Without their support and prayers I could not do all that I do.

I thank God for Derek Bird, who since 2013, has been a constant help as a Personal Assistant and a great friend. English is my second language, therefore his help in checking and revising this booklet has been invaluable. I also thank God for Jim Johnston, who has been my spiritual mentor since 2016 and has often challenged me to be everything God wants me to be. He was the one that challenged me to write, and here I am.

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I have been so blessed to have a leadership team of elders and deacons, who have placed prayer as the first priority in the church. Their constant example and encouragement have helped shape me as a pastor and leader. Brother Norman Moore's prayer life has been a wonderful inspiration. Aaron Muguti's commitment to fasting has spurred me on to write this booklet, for the good of all God's people.

Finally, I am so thankful to the church community. Since 2006, Transformation Centre has been the source of my greatest joy. I am blessed to be encouraged by the church to grow and develop, along side mistakes and successes. Both have been very much part of my spiritual journey and I look forward to more of what God has for us.

Soli Deo Gloria!



Part 1

before you start

Introduction

A word from pastor Nick Serb



There's never been a more opportune time for God's church to rediscover the power and the blessing of fasting and prayer. As I look around our society, I see the need for a new and fresh move of the Holy Spirit upon His church.

In fact, we do not have to look too far to realise the spiritual need of our generation. The state of our own hearts is a clear testimony of how much we need to be awakened by God.

We are experiencing a spiritual crisis of identity. The children of God have forgotten who they are in Christ. The church of our day lives in fear and seems powerless in the face of spiritual opposition. The church is obsessed with the sin in the world, ignoring the sin within the church. The Holy Spirit is grieved by our lack of love for God and one another.

If we neglect the reality of where we are spiritually, we are in danger of not being able to get to where we need to be. If you look at a map and see where you need to go, you must also know where you are. Getting where you need to be is impossible if you do not know where you are now.

We must also awake to the reality around us. Society has changed. This generation faces dilemmas our parents and grandparents never even imagined. We must take comfort in the fact that nothing taking place in our society is strange or foreign to God. From the very beginning, human nature has always been driven by sinful impulses. Since the Fall, when Adam and Even followed their desires rather than the command of God, the world has been driven by sin.

Let us not despair! Paul's letter to the Romans is filled with encouragement. The apostle Paul takes us on a journey of faith. In the first 3 chapters he lays down the foundation of man's need for salvation. We have sinned and Christ has died for us in order to give us the opportunity to believe in Him and be saved. Then he continues to tell us about faith, giving us the example of Abraham. In Chapter 6, he tells us how we have died to sin and we are no longer under its dominion. In Chapter 7, he tells us how every time we try to live a righteous life on our own, we end up doing what we do not want to do. However, in chapter 8, he makes it clear that "in Christ", we are no longer under condemnation. In fact, while "in Christ" we are more than conquerors.

God's purpose is that every Christian should experience this life of victory. And yet, over and over again, we see and experience spiritual defeat. The sentiment expressed in this

booklet is simple: there must be more than this. The song writer, Tim Hughes, puts it this way:

*There must be more than this
O breath of God, come breathe within
There must be more than this
Spirit of God we wait for You
Fill us anew we pray
Fill us anew we pray.*¹

In this booklet, I invite you and your church to break the status quo and draw closer to God through fasting and prayer. God's promise is that He will draw close to us. Use this booklet as a guide, not a manual nor an end to all things. This is not a theological essay on fasting and prayer. It is simply a devotional guide, to encourage you to fast and pray.

Part 1 includes an introduction and it sets out the plan for the seven days of fasting and prayer. It also includes a story of transformation. This is an example of how prayer and fasting changed a life and transformed a church.

Part 2 invites you to get ready. In this section you will find some basic ideas on fasting. You will read about what fasting is, the purpose or reason of fasting and what to do during fasting. Then you will explore brokenness, its Biblical understanding, and how you may experience a level of brokenness during your fasting and prayer.

Part 3 contains the devotional material for your seven days of fasting and prayer.

Day One will deal with fasting and prayer according to Jesus. You will be looking at Jesus' position on fasting and prayer and why this is different than just prayer.

Day Two will consider the subject of the best time for fasting and prayer. Jesus gives us important clues when we need to fast and pray.

Day Three will look at fasting and prayer in times of trouble. We know difficult times will come and so we must be ready to face them with fasting and prayer.

Day Four will be about fasting and prayer in times of revelation. When God reveals His plan to Daniel, he fasts and prays to see them fulfilled.

Day Five will be about the role of fasting and prayer in a spiritual revival. God often calls His people to a spiritual revival, through fasting and prayer.

Day Six will cover fasting and prayer as we are waiting for a promise of God to be fulfilled. Anna and Simeon will help us understand waiting.

¹ <https://www.worshiptogether.com/songs/consuming-fire-hughes>

Day Seven will teach us about fasting and prayer in times of ministry. Paul, the Apostle, will help us learn how to make important decisions through fasting and prayer.

Part 4 looks at what to do after finishing the journey of the Seven Days. You will find a call to evangelism in “the market place”, an encouragement to a continuous life of prayer and power as well as an example of what John Wesley used as principles for regular days of fasting and prayer.

Each day, you will be encouraged to read the Word of God. You will also be encouraged to think about prayer on your own and with the church. There will be some practical advice on private and public prayer. It is always useful to write things down, especially when you are listening to the voice of the Holy Spirit while you pray.

Let me offer the following admission. I am completely aware of the pitfalls of writing anything on fasting and prayer. Any human rule of “don’t touch” or “don’t eat” can come in direct contradiction to God’s Word that says to enjoy food, to eat and drink to the glory of God. Our fasting and prayer is meant to be an act of worship. The end result of your time with God is meant to bring spiritual maturity and joy not burdens or legalism.

This booklet is meant to be practical. The call to fast and pray is different than your day to day prayer time. Every Christian is called to pray daily and develop their relationship with God. Your quiet time / devotional time, is necessary as part of your discipleship.

However, there are times when you must go further. That’s when you are called to fast and pray. Your decision to fast mean you refrain from food and only drink liquid such as water , tea or coffee. Your fasting is joined by prayers of supplication and intercession.

You are encouraged to commit around **40 minutes** every day. This includes reading a passage from the Bible and a short devotional. Then spend the remaining of that time in prayer. You can take notes if you desire to do so.

Many books have been written on prayer to last a life time. This booklet is meant to be a guide to help you create a discipline of fasting and prayer. It is intended to bring glory to God and benefit the church. It can be used by those who are familiar with fasting and prayer and those who have never fasted and prayed before.

All you need is to set our your reason for fasting and prayer, decide the time and do it. If you can get others to join you in your journey, it would be even better. If you have never fasted before you may want to fast alternate days or pick a day in the week for fasting.

Victor

A story of transformation

The story begins in November 2006. I had just left Romania to come and spend some time with Mount Zion church in Lisburn, Northern Ireland.

The plan was to spend the night with my dear friends, Stephen and Lisa in Bangor, then drive the next day to meet the leaders of the church and be introduced to the church setting in Lisburn.

I was meant to spend a few weeks with the church, preaching, teaching and doing some pastoral work, in order to test and see what God had for me. You may call this period a trial or just a time to explore God's will and direction for the future.

I never had an issue leaving Romania behind. My previous job as an English teacher in a military school was fulfilling, but I always knew that was not God's plan for my life. There was more. I had already been convinced that I would remain to serve God in Northern Ireland. However, I needed to be sure. This was the reason for getting on the plane and traveling to Lisburn. I needed to be 100% convinced that this was God's plan.

On my first day, I was given the tour of the church building. Norman Wright and Ronnie Nesbitt did a good job explaining things, including the recent history of the church. It was good to get some information as the plan was to spend some time serving the church.

I remember clearly, being taken to a side room. They called it "The Prayer Room". At that time, I had no clue that this particular room will be so closely connected with the most wonderful encounters with Jesus, I would ever have in my life.

As I walked into the room I was introduced to Victor, who was working in the room, plastering the wall. I encountered a polite, smiling and joyful man. We connected instantly. As we continued the tour I enquired about Victor's situation. I was told he had been attending the church a while ago, but at that moment he was away from God. I was told the church was still praying for Victor. Although he was not attending any more he still loved the church and was happy to do work around the building when it was necessary.

I was then taken to the pastor's office. The church hadn't had a pastor for quite a while and so the office was now used as a storage space. The dust was everywhere, so when the tour finished I decided to stay behind and tidy the office.

The pastor's office was next door to the Prayer Room, so I went in and offered Victor a cup of coffee. I never knew that cup of coffee would be the start of an amazing friendship and would change both of our lives.

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To my surprise, Victor agreed and so we found ourselves having some coffee (I think Victor had tea as I was simply not accustomed to drinking tea). We had a good conversation and some laughs. In Northern Ireland, when you have a good time, you have good craic. I was learning very quickly.

It wasn't long into our conversation that I began to feel this was turning into a divine appointment. Coming from a very traditional church background meant that it took me a while to discern, however I could hear this inner voice saying: "Nick, the man you see in front of you will be the first person you will baptise in this place."

I could only assume this was the voice of the Holy Spirit, so I told Victor what my heart was saying. "This may sound strange to you", I said "but I think you will be the first person I will baptise in this church."

He laughed quite loudly and said: "you must have some faith pastor. I can't see that happening right now." I told him I will be praying for him, then we went back to our jobs. That day, the Lord put Victor on my heart in a way I never experienced before. I gave myself to prayer for Victor and the whole church. The congregation was small, but the Lord was calling me to pray like never before. I remember being awakened during the night to pray for Victor. This continued for a while until I had to go to see him and say: "Victor, you must get saved so I can get some decent sleep."

During my first weeks there, I fasted and prayed, mostly to know God's will for me to stay there and for God to give me a vision for the church. Every Tuesday night I was meeting with a small band of faithful prayer warriors, seeking God's face with groaning and tears. We all knew it was the only way to see the church going forward.

After a while I was introduced to Irene, Victor's wife. She and her friends had been meeting weekly for many years to pray and fast for her husband. Knowing God's promise I made Victor's salvation a priority in our prayer times with the church.

I believed God will keep His word about Victor, but there were two problems: Victor was not a Christian and the church had no baptismal tank. In spite of these two issues I continued to fast and pray for Victor every Thursday. Others joined me in fasting and prayer.

Brother Norman Moore was eager to introduce the church to long prayer sessions that would last until the early hours of the morning. We did that with joy and God gave us some amazing blessings in prayer. We pleaded with God for the church, for Victor and the community.

In February 2007 I was finally inducted as the pastor of Mount Zion Free Methodist Church, which later came to be known as Transformation Centre. This came after the Lord had confirmed to me and to the church that this was His will for us. For the following two years I preached the Gospel with joy. I also continued to pray for Victor, holding on to God's promise.

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During one prayer meeting, brother Norman challenged me and said: "what must God do to save Victor? Let's ask Him to do whatever He must do, so Victor could be saved." I agreed. So that night we poured our souls to God and asked God to do whatever He must do to save Victor.

That Sunday Victor was in his garage, on a ladder, getting some tools ready for the next day when he fell off and broke his hip. That week I visited Victor in hospital and for the first time we were able to have a heart to heart conversation about his soul. Victor took the chance and opened his heart to me. It was the first time he had ever done that. I shared the Gospel and I encouraged Victor to confess his sins to God, ask His forgiveness and come to Him. In the end of my visit, I prayed and I left my Bible with him. "You need it more than I do" I said, and left the hospital praying.

It wasn't long after, that Victor got home with plaster on his legs and crutches. I clearly remember the Sunday morning around 10.30 am when I got a phone call from Irene. "Come quickly" she said, "Victor is not well, he did not sleep at all last night." I had one shoe already on. I put the other shoe on, jumped in the car and drove to their house on the Hillhall Road, just outside Lisburn.

I found Victor in the conservatory, sitting in an armchair. His two crutches were by his side and he was crying uncontrollably. I stopped in the door way and as I looked at Victor I began to weep with joy. I knew God had been there before me.

"Pastor Nick", Victor muttered, "It's time God takes over Victor Irwin's life!" We read the Bible together, we prayed together and we cried with joy. That morning Victor entered the kingdom of God and was transformed forever.

Following his conversion, Victor burned his bridges with sin and God began healing the family from the hurt and consequences of a sinful past. It was shortly after that Victor built a baptismal tank in the church, paid for it and Irene and he were the first ones to ever enter it. Victor was the first to be baptised, in front of a packed church. There was not one dry eye that night.

His transformation caused a domino effect in his family and the church. God was gracious and family members, one by one, came to the Lord. Many believed because of what God did in Victor, as an answer to prayer. God used Victor to bring many to Christ, as he began to share the Gospel with those around him. Today, Victor leads prayer meetings in the church, in the Prayer Room where people used to pray for his salvation.

We still pray and fast for others. We do not give up. There are so many more, just like Victor who need to know Jesus. This story is just one example on how God used fasting and prayer to prove to us that He is listening.