

SERMON REFLECTIONS

Transforming Our Nation Through Prayer And Fasting

Daniel 9 | 23 March 2025 | Rev Dr Aaron Tay

Sermon Reflection Questions

1. Read Daniel 9 aloud (perhaps two to three verses per DG member).

Was there anything from the chapter that was new to you, or had an impact on you?

For the prophecy in verses 24 to 27, some of you might have plausible interpretation(s) from your study (from Bible commentaries); share with one another and discuss. Importantly, ask yourself what the prophecy may mean to us now.

2. Daniel 9:3 *"So I turned to the Lord God and pleaded with him in prayer and petition, in fasting, and in sackcloth and ashes."*

Discuss the importance of prayer, petition and fasting – think about other Bible stories where God's people prayed and fasted (and petitioned). How did God help His people in those stories?

In other words, answer this question: why should we pray and fast? Do you believe it is absolutely important for our own life (every aspect and not just spiritual) and for our church and nation that we pray and fast regularly?

3. Using the framework (eight gateways of influence) which was mentioned during the sermon, think about Singapore, and how we should pray and petition for Singapore. What are the sins we should

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confess for Singapore? What else can we ask the Lord to build into Singapore? Take some time to pray and confess on behalf of Singapore.

4. Notes regarding fasting was given – I would like to challenge us to use this season of Lent to start fasting.

You can fast one meal a day, or you can fast one meal a week.

You can fast by abstaining from food (or particular types of food that you are very fond of – alcoholic drinks, meat, etc.) or from something that is very important to you (and might sometime take you from walking closer with God, for example, using the Internet, watching TV, shopping, etc.).

The important thing is to use our desire for what we are fasting from, and to use that hunger and channel it to hunger after God and His righteousness. You can use this hunger to understand the starving/needy people in the world, and ask God to use you to help some of them somehow.

For those with medical conditions and abstaining from food might be bad for you, fast from other things which are important to you instead.

Let someone else know and be accountable to each other.

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NOTES REGARDING FASTING

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8 gateways of influence	We must <u>Repent</u> and ask God to <u>Strip Away</u>	We must cry out to God to <u>Act, Build in and Strengthen</u>
<i>Arts and Entertainment</i>	Defilement	Holiness, Wholesomeness
<i>Business</i>	Greed, Pride, Dishonesty	Integrity, Fear of the Lord
<i>Church</i>	Complacency, spiritual blindness, false perceptions	Knowing Jesus in His sufferings, Truth & Faith, Influence in Community and individual lives.
<i>Communications and Media</i>	Hidden motives, lies	Truthfulness, Righteousness
<i>Education and schools</i>	Wrong values	Godly values and morals
<i>Family</i>	Strife/discord, no priority to build relationship	Bonding, Good family ties
<i>Government and leadership</i>	Abuse of power, complacency	Righteousness, Accountability, Dependence on God, Integrity
<i>Science and technology</i>	Humanism	Wisdom, Welfare, Ethics

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I want to challenge you as an individual, and your disciple group to regularly pray for our nation Singapore. Remember God's promise in Jeremiah 29:7 *"Also, seek the **peace** and prosperity of the city to which I have carried you into exile. **Pray** to the LORD for it, because if it prospers, you too will prosper."*

There are many things the government and the citizens of Singapore can do to make it peaceful and prosperous. But there are some things beyond human abilities, where only the blessings of God will help. And remember, if Singapore prospers, we, the people of God will prosper too.

Fasting for our Nation (and ourselves, our family, our church)

- **Moses** fasted (40 days and nights) before receiving the law from God (*Exodus 34:28*).
- **King Jehoshaphat** called for a fast in all Israel for God's protection (2 *Chronicles 20:3*).
- The **men of Nineveh** fasted and put on sackcloth to show their repentance (*Jonah 3:5*).
- **Jesus** fasted for 40 days and 40 nights before the start of His ministry (*Matthew 4:2*).
- The **church of Antioch** fasted before choosing and sending Paul and Barnabas off on their first missionary journey (*Acts 13:2-3*).
- **Paul and Barnabas** prayed and fasted for the appointment of elders (*Acts 14:23*).

Biblically, fasting is abstaining from food, drink, sleep or sex (or anything important) to focus on a period of spiritual growth. Specifically, we humbly deny something of the flesh to glorify God, enhance our spirit, and go deeper in our prayer life.

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Having a dedicated time of prayer and fasting is not a way of manipulating God into doing what you desire. Rather, it is simply forcing yourself to focus and rely on God for the strength, provision, and wisdom you need.

Anyone can fast. Some may not be able to fast from food (diabetics, for example), but everyone can temporarily give up something in order to focus on God.

In Isaiah 58; we learn what a "true fast" is. It's not just a one-time act of humility and denial before God, it's a lifestyle of servant ministry to others. As Isaiah tells us, fasting encourages humility, loosens the chains of injustice, unties the chords of the yoke, frees the oppressed, feeds the hungry, provides for the poor, and clothes the naked.

In view of helping you start down the slow path to good fasting, here is some advice.

1. Start small.

Don't go from no fasting to attempting a week-long fast. Start with one meal; maybe fast one meal a week for several weeks. Then try two meals, and so forth. It's *not* recommended that you abstain from water during a fast of any length.

2. Plan what you'll do instead of that which you are fasting (be it eating or watching TV).

Fasting isn't merely an act of self-deprivation, but a spiritual discipline for seeking more of God's fullness. We should plan for *what positive pursuit to undertake* in the time it normally takes to eat. One significant part of fasting is the time it creates for prayer and meditation on God's word or some act of love for others.

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3. Consider how it will affect others.

If you have regular family lunches on Sunday, assess how your abstaining will affect them, and let them know ahead of time, or choose another day.

- a. I would like to fast from Food, Phone, TV, Social Media,
_____, etc.
- b. I would like to fast at this frequency: _____ days a week
_____ hours / meals a day
- c. During my fast, my plan is to Read the Bible, Pray for
_____, Know Jesus.
- d. I will be mutually accountable to _____.

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