

CONSECRATION

(November 4 - 11, 2012)



“Early in the morning Joshua and all the Israelites set out from Shittim and went to the Jordan, where they camped before crossing over. After three days the officers went throughout the camp, giving orders to the people: ‘When you see the ark of the covenant of the Lord your God, and the priests, who are Levites, carrying it, you are to move out from your positions and follow it. Then you will know which way to go, since you have never been this way before. But keep a distance of about a thousand yards between you and the ark; do not go near it.’ Joshua told the people, ‘Consecrate yourselves, for tomorrow the Lord will do amazing things among you.’”

Joshua 3:3-5

Starting this evening*, we will begin a week of prayer and fasting as a community. It is a time when we set ourselves apart, and make intentional choices to create more (heart) space and time to worship & seek the Lord of our hearts and lives. God loves it when His children draw near to Him. James says in 4:8, “*Draw near to God and He will draw near to you.*” God promises that HE will draw near to us in response to us drawing near to Him. So, let’s unite our hearts and set aside this week to draw near to Him as a community, and wait to see with wonder & anticipation how He will draw near to us!

In this booklet, you will find suggestion on how to structure your facetime, and daily reflection written by 7 of our staff members. May the Lord who has called you and is still calling you to Himself today grant you the grace of deeper encounter with Him. Open your heart to Him, and He will fill you to overflowing! Journey with others at Epicentre and the power of experiencing God in community will cause your heart to fall in love with the Church that Jesus loves and calls His Bride.

* Tonight (11/4), join us for a night of prayer & worship at HOPE room from 6-7:30pm as we begin this fast together.

Suggestion for Prayer Time

1. **Set Prayer Time:** Decide ahead of time when your prayer time will be and how long it will be. Make it the same time everyday if possible. Write it down on your calendar or appointment book, so you can tell people you are not free at that time. This is the most important “appointment” you have each day. It should not be easily changed.
2. **Place:** Find a quiet place where you will not be disturbed. Turn off your phone, blackberry, computer...whatever that will cause unnecessary distraction for you during this time.
3. **Posture:** Come with expectancy to meet the One who loves you tremendously. Come with humility, allowing the Spirit to be the One with full freedom to lead you in whatever way/direction He desires.
4. **Process:** Consider the following format for your special time with God.
 - a. Quieting down: take time to calm down and focus your attention on God. If it is helpful, pray short prayer like, “Come, Lord Jesus,” “Lord, I want to meet you today,” “God, open my heart to receive Your love,” “Speak, O Lord, your servant is listening.” Come up with your own short prayer phrases that help you turn your eyes to Jesus. OR if singing a worship song helps to turn your attention to God, do that! (We have a theme song for our fast – *We Are An Offering*, which you can worship to as well. See next section.)
 - b. Asking for Grace: pray for the grace to hear the voice of the Spirit, the wisdom and discernment to understand, and the openness and softness of heart to accept and obey what He is saying to you.
 - c. Meditative Reading & Listening: Read through the daily reflection *slowly*. Reflection pointers are provided for each reading if you need them. Be attentive to what the Spirit is trying to say to you. Do not rush this time!
 - d. Journaling: Journal down any thought or insights you receive.

- e. Thanksgiving: Give thanks for His grace when your prayer time is up. Pray for grace to follow through and live out what He shows you in practical ways. You may consider closing your prayer time with the Lord’s Prayer or *We Are an Offering*.
- f. Prayer Review: At the end of your prayer time, consider spending a brief moment to review your prayer experience. This exercise helps you to learn more about prayer over time, as well as discover things you may want to bring back to prayer at a later time. Questions you may ask are:
 - i. How was the prayer time? How did I experience God’s presence? What was His presence like?
 - ii. Where did I feel most closely to God? What drew my heart towards Him?
 - iii. What difficulties did I experience? Was it hard for me to concentrate? Was it because I was tired or bored? Was it because I was resistant to the direction the Spirit seemed to want to lead me towards?

Journal down your review. These are valuable reflections to go back to regularly to see how the Spirit has been moving and working in you.

Theme Song

We have chosen the song, *We Are An Offering*, to be the *theme song* for our fast. Consider worshipping with this song during your facetime as well as throughout the day. May it become an unceasing prayer of our hearts in giving all of ourselves to Him.

Here are the lyrics, and if you want to listen to the song, you may find it at <http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=bVC7F0Hechk>.

“We Are An Offering”

We lift our voices, we lift our hands;
We lift our lives up to You, we are an offering.

Lord use our voices, Lord use our hands;
Lord use our lives they are Yours, we are an offering.

All that we have, all that we are;
All that we hope to be, we give to You,
We give to You. We are an offering.

Monday (11/5)

Consecration

John Lo

“Joshua told the people, ‘Consecrate yourselves, for tomorrow the Lord will do amazing things among you.’”

Joshua 3:5

As a church, we enter into this season of consecration with anticipation. Like the Israelites, we’re believing this act of consecration is a step of preparation before we step into the fullness of our promised destiny.

Set Apart for the Sacred. The English word “consecrate” is made up of the prefix *con*, which means ‘with’ and *sacred*. When we consecrate ourselves, we are aligning ourselves with God in practical ways. In the Old Testament, there were specific laws as to how consecrated bread, wine or anointing oil was to be made. These were *set apart*, not regular or for any other use. Similarly, the Levites were a consecrated people: a tribe *set apart* for God’s purposes. So consecration is an act of our *setting ourselves apart* for a season of time for God. Of course, Christians are *set apart* people anyway. The Greek *ecclesia* (‘church’) means ‘called out.’ We are not of this world but are called to live as aliens and strangers in this world (1 Pet 2 2.10-12).

Because this is so easy to forget, it’s important for us to periodically go through periods of consecration, not only to clean us out from the filth and grime of this world, but to help us remember that we are a *set apart people*.

Focusing on the Sacred rather than the common. In the OT, the act of consecration often had to do with refraining from sex and washing their clothes (see, for example, Exo 19.10-15). The Israelites were asked to do purposeful things for a *set apart time* when they were to focus on the sacred as opposed to the common. So,

consecration can be seen as a purposeful series of actions, which we take to set apart ourselves, our time and our mind space from the common so that we can have more of the sacred God.

Fasting is a great example of denying ourselves **from** something that is good (food) **for** something that is better (God). This period of consecration is fasting from food, the internet, magazines, videogames and movies (for example) so that we can re-purpose that time, and re-focus our hearts on God.

As I look towards our period of consecration, I feel the personal need to just slow down. My life feels too fast, my attention too split and my spirit too multi-tasked. I get caught in too many tangents. Part of my act of consecration will be fasting from fast stuff: internet, phone apps, media and the like. I need to starve my attention deficit so my spirit can focus on the main thing.

In this season, take the time to figure out what consecration means to you. May your spirit come alive in new ways.

Reflection:

- Ask the Lord, "Show me what it means to consecrate myself to You in this season." Journal what the Holy Spirit brings to your mind.
- Ask the Spirit what practical thing(s) you need to do and fast from, in order to set yourself apart for Him. Commit those practicals to the Lord and ask for His grace to obey and walk as one who's been called out to reflect His glory.
- Pray, "I am set apart, consecrated to the Lord" slowly for a couple minutes. Be still and receive His grace.

Tuesday (11/6)

Consecration & Prayer

Fiona Tong

"Jesus gave them this answer: 'I tell you the truth, the Son can do nothing by himself; he can do only what he sees his Father doing, because whatever the Father does the Son also does. For the Father loves the Son and shows him all he does.'"

John 5:19-20a

"I am the vine; you are the branches. If a man remains in me and I in him, he will bear much fruit; apart from me you can do nothing...If you remain in me and my words remain in you, ask whatever you wish, and it will be given you."

John 15:5, 7

Consecration is a response to the invitation to enter into the divine love relationship. When God calls us to consecrate ourselves, HE is saying, "Throw all ungodliness and impurities away. Come into the place of holiness where I dwell and you will discover My plan and purposes for you and humankind." Consecration is a life-long journey. There are times, like this week of prayer & fasting, when we make special decisions and plans to set ourselves apart for the Lord. But daily we are invited to live a consecrated lifestyle. Daily we are invited to come closer to hear the heartbeat of God. Daily we are entering more deeply into the divine love relationship the Trinity shares with each other.

The Trinity, Father, Son & Holy Spirit, are One. In that divine relationship of one-ness, Jesus can't help but be part of what the Father does and says. The amazing thing is Jesus said we are the branches and He is the Vine. We've been grafted and invited to be one with Jesus, who is one with the Father & the Holy Spirit. So, in Christ, we're invited into that divine love relationship. How does it happen? We don't know. It's a mystery we will never be able to fully comprehend this side of heaven. All we know is that the invitation has been given. When we consecrate ourselves, throwing away everything that hinders,

we step into that relationship and space where we hear and see what the Father's saying and doing, and we can't help but join in. His love grabs ahold of our hearts like nothing else, and there's no turning back.

And in that love relationship, prayer is the obvious response. To me, prayer is more than just verbal pleas and declarations. Prayer is life. It is to be where God is and is a response to the love in His heart. Sometimes there are words, sometimes there aren't any words. Prayer happens when we are in our prayer closet, when we speak a word of encouragement and honor to someone, when we show them the way to Jesus, and when we give someone a hug or offer them a cup of water. Prayer is a response to the love we see in His heart. Because we love Him, we want what He wants, we do what we see Him doing, we say what we hear Him saying, and we ask what we see His heart longs for. When we do that, how can God resist answering and giving us what we ask - it's what HE wants too!! "Pray without ceasing" (1 Thessalonians 5:17) is truly possible when we consecrate ourselves daily and remain in that love relationship with the Divine.

Reflection:

- Pray this prayer slowly several times: "Father, Son, and Holy Spirit, draw me deeper into the love relationship you have with each other. Allow me to see the depth of Your love for each other." Be still and wait for God to grace you with revelation about this divine love relationship.
- Pray, "Jesus, teach me the secret of remaining/abiding, and how to live a life of unceasing prayer." Listen to what Jesus is showing you and journal it down.
- "Show me what's on Your heart, Father." Wait and listen to what the Father wants to show you about His heart. Respond accordingly with love - it could be a(n) (intercessory) prayer, a blessing He wants you to bring to someone.....Journal it down, and decide when you will do it (if it's an action item for after your facetime).

Wednesday (11/7)

Consecration & Worship

Ben Hui

"Who may ascend into the hill of the Lord? Or who may stand in His holy place? He who has clean hands and a pure heart, Who has not lifted up his soul to an idol, Nor sworn deceitfully. He shall receive blessing from the Lord, And righteousness from the God of his salvation. This is Jacob, the generation of those who seek Him"

Psalms 24:3-6

The "hill of the Lord" and "His holy place" represent God's presence. Back in the Old Testament, God's presence was specifically located in one place. The "hill of the Lord" represented the Temple, which was used to house God's presence. "His holy place" represented the very center of the Temple, where God's presence dwelled. The Psalmist wrote that nobody could enter into God's presence except those with clean hands and a pure heart. At the core of this message, it reveals a response of worship on our part that includes confession and consecration.

In worship, we come into agreement with God. Confession also means us coming into agreement with God. It is an acknowledgement that His ways are right and true. When we come before the Lord in worship, things begin to be put in the right perspective. We become increasingly aware of the character of God, and where we stand in relation to Him. Worship brings us into a place of humility, and it leads us to confession. Part of consecrating ourselves in worship is to ask the Lord if there are any areas of sin in our lives we need to confess. Where do we need to be made clean again? What sacrifices must we make in order to enter His holy place? Let us ask the Holy Spirit today for help to examine our own hearts and purify us. If there is anything keeping us from experiencing the greater depths and riches of His presence and relationship, let us bring it before the Lord. There is no shame or

condemnation here. The author of the book of Hebrews writes, “Therefore, since we have a great high priest who has gone through the heavens, Jesus the Son of God, let us hold firmly to the faith we profess. For we do not have a high priest who is unable to sympathize with our weaknesses, but we have one who has been tempted in every way, just as we are - yet was without sin. *Let us then approach the throne of grace with confidence*, so that we may receive mercy and find grace to help us in our time of need.” (Hebrews 4:14-16; italics added) The Apostle John says, “If we confess our sins, he is faithful and just and will forgive us our sins and purify us from all unrighteousness.” (1 John 1:9) All our sins have been nailed to the cross. Let’s come, confess them and receive the forgiveness and purification offered to us freely. Let’s be people of clean hands and pure hearts who can enter His holy place with confidence!

Reflection:

- Take some time to worship. Suggestion: “How he loves us” or “Amazed.”
- Staying in this place of love and grace, ask the Holy Spirit to show you areas of sins that’s blocking you from experiencing a greater depth and riches of His presence and relationship. Write them down, come boldly to the throne of God and one by one, confess them to the Lord and receive His forgiveness. Be still and ask the Father to show you His heart for you.
- Ask the Holy Spirit if there is any practical step you need to take in order to keep standing in His holy place.

Tonight (11/7), join us for a night of prayer & worship at HOPE room from 6-7:30pm as we mark the middle of our fast.

Thursday (11/8)

Consecration & Destiny: The Best Life

Evelyn Lo

“For I know the plans I have for you,’ declares the LORD, ‘plans to prosper you and not to harm you, plans to give you hope and a future. Then you will call upon me and come and pray to me, and I will listen to you. You will seek me and find me when you seek me with all your heart. I will be found by you,’ declares the LORD.”

Jeremiah 29.11-13b

Consecration could be such a big word. One definition would be: “a solemn commitment of your life or your time to some cherished purpose.” But I like to think of it as being “set apart”, being wholehearted in purpose.

When we realize that God has a destiny for us, *specifically for us*, it causes us to want to be set apart and wholehearted towards the things of God. If we really believe His destiny is *the best* for us, and that we are created for a *specific* purpose – we won’t hesitate to forget what’s behind and run towards it (Php. 3:13) because there is no other calling or purpose that is worth living for. Why settle for a lesser life? Everyone wants the best life, but it can only be found in God and His purpose for us.

In Jeremiah 29:13, it states that, “If you look for me wholeheartedly, you will find me.” Here is a promise that as we begin seeking Him wholeheartedly, God will allow Himself to be found by us. Some may be asking, “But I don’t know what my destiny or purpose is.” Begin with starting afresh and setting apart your life to seeking Him wholeheartedly. He will guide, lead and direct you as your eyes are gazed upon Him. He’s more excited to reveal what He has planned for you than you can ever imagine! He simply just has the Best for you!

Reflection:

- Ask the Lord, “what is Your have plan & purpose for me in this season?” Begin to write down what comes to your mind. Do not analyze. Just journal your thoughts down. When you sense God is done revealing His heart and plan for you, ask Him to give you scriptures or scriptural truth that will support what you feel you hear from Him. This will be a confirmation that what you hear is truly from Him.
- Next, ask the Holy Spirit to help you put what God spoke to you into a prayer. Daily pray this prayer back to God – it’s your way of saying, “God, I agree and receive the plan and purpose You have destined for my life. Fulfill it, Lord.”

Note: if you are a parent, you can go through this prayer process and ask God what He desires for each of your children, so you know how and what to pray for them.

Friday (11/9)

Consecration for Families

Debbie Sayvoitz

Consecration is an important aspect of raising a family. I still marvel to this day about the story of Abraham who obediently laid his only son Isaac on the altar of sacrifice (Gen. 22) as the Lord asked of him. I’m not sure I could have acted with such surrender and faith. Just before he was about to slay his son, the Lord spoke to Abraham and said, “Do not lay a hand on the boy....do not do anything to him. Now I know that you fear God, because you have not withheld from me your son, your only son.” This act required a complete surrender of that which Abraham loved most; that which represented all his future hopes and dreams. It was after this that God gave Abraham the promise that both he and his descendants would be blessed and take possession of the cities of their enemies.

How do we as parents fully surrender our children to the Lord? It takes daily surrendering of our hopes, dreams, and plans for our children completely into His hands, remembering that our children are the Lord’s and are on loan to us to raise and nurture in the ways of God. It also requires that we keep our relationship with the Lord our top priority (like Abraham) and keeping our relationship with our spouse precedence over other earthly relationships. Healthy families are those where mom and dad share a deep love relationship first with each other and secondly with their children. When the needs of children are consistently put above the needs of one’s spouse, marriage bond weakens and falls apart over time. Children thrive in a home where there is the security of parents who love and cherish one another. Strong marriage nurtures strong and secured children.

Single parent families have an equally real challenge to surrender their children to God when they are the sole caregiver. Maintaining a vibrant walk with our Lord and seeking Him for the care, discipline and provision of our children is key. In addition, it’s important to recognize and receive that the church family can play an instrumental role in raising up your children as well. Invite others to invest and

speak into your children's lives where you feel a lack.

When our kids have misbehaved and we are unsure how to properly discipline them, it's important to inquire of God first before consulting with friends, books, internet and popular theories - "Lord these children are yours before they are mine; show me how to shape their lives and discipline them the way You desire."

Remember, God will always be faithful even when we blow it and get it wrong. He has promised that His grace will always be sufficient for us, and His power is made perfect in our weakness. Be filled with His abundant grace today!

Reflection:

If you are a parent:

- Take time to talk to God about your relationships:
 - with God
 - with your spouse
 - with your children (one at a time)

Ask Him to show you in what ways you need to consecrate each of these relationships to Him.

If you are NOT a parent:

- Take time to talk to God about your relationships:
 - with God
 - with your parents
 - with your siblings/closest friends (one at a time)

Ask Him to show you in what ways you need to consecrate each of these relationships to Him.

Saturday (11/10)

Consecration & Body Life

Paul Graf

"For just as the body is one and has many members, and all the members of the body, though many, are one body, so it is with Christ. For in one Spirit we were all baptized into one body - Jews or Greeks, slaves or free - and all were made to drink of one Spirit. For the body does not consist of one member but of many. If the foot should say, 'Because I am not a hand, I do not belong to the body,' that would not make it any less a part of the body. And if the ear should say, 'Because I am not an eye, I do not belong to the body,' that would not make it any less a part of the body. If the whole body were an eye, where would be the sense of hearing? If the whole body were an ear, where would be the sense of smell? But as it is, God arranged the members in the body, each one of them, as he chose. If all were a single member, where would the body be? As it is, there are many parts, yet one body. The eye cannot say to the hand, 'I have no need of you' nor again the head to the feet, 'I have no need of you.' On the contrary, the parts of the body that seem to be weaker are indispensable, and on those parts of the body that we think less honorable we bestow the greater honor, and our unpresentable parts are treated with greater modesty, which our more presentable parts do not require. But God has so composed the body, giving greater honor to the part that lacked it, that there may be no division in the body, but that the members may have the same care for one another. If one member suffers, all suffer together; if one member is honored, all rejoice together. Now you are the body of Christ and individually members of it."

1 Corinthians 12:12-27

Setting ourselves apart for God's purposes is a very personal thing. It is a daily choice we make against the tide of forces wanting us to invest our lives in the world. We set aside our minds, working to keep them full of honorable, just, pure, and commendable thoughts. We set aside our work, doing it for the Lord. We set aside our free time, seeking, serving, and sabbathing, in our effort to receive the rewards laid out in Matthew 6:1-18.

The Desert Fathers felt that being set apart meant isolation from the world, and so they sequestered themselves in remote places to seek holiness and encounters with God. We (most of us anyway!) don't have that opportunity. We are deep in the muck of life, and are constantly faced with the battle – will the world rub off on us, or will we rub off on the world around us, being light in the darkness?

Even though being set apart is a very individual choice, part of what Jesus does when He sets us apart is to call us to be part of a body. Some people want to live their faith individually, and participate in church without really being invested. But we are called and intended to be part of a body. Committing ourselves to Christ without committing to the body He has called us to be part of means we will not experience the fullness of who He has set us apart to be. If Christ looks on the church like a husband does a bride, we can't casually dismiss her as optional – something we do when it is convenient or comfortable. Being set apart for God is being set into His body, to strive, suffer, and rejoice as one. Being set apart for Christ's purposes means being different from the world, though in it, and being one with the others who also follow the same high calling.

Reflection:

- Spend sometime to ask Jesus about His heart and thoughts towards His Bride – the Church, in particular, Epicentre, the body He has placed you in in this season. Ask him to show you if there's an inconsistency between how He feels about His Body and how you see it. Ask for forgiveness if needed. Enter into a time of intercession for the Church at large and/or Epicentre based on what He shows you.
- Take sometime to reflect on your participation in the Epicentre community. Are you functioning fully as a part of this body? Your participation is key to the health of Epicentre as well as for your own growth. Ask the Holy Spirit to show you if you are functioning in this body to the extent you are called to. Respond accordingly.

Tonight (11/6), join us for a night of prayer & worship at HOPE room from 6-7:30pm as we come to the last night of our fast.

Sunday (11/11)

Consecration and missions

Janet Chen

“When you see the ark of the covenant of the Lord your God being carried by the Levitical priests, then you shall set out from your place. Follow it, so that you may know the way you should go, for you have not passed this way before...” Then Joshua said to the people, ‘[Consecrate] yourselves; for tomorrow the Lord will do wonders among you.’”

Joshua 3:3-5 (NRSV)

As Epicentre enters into a “you have not passed this way before” season, this passage from Joshua is especially helpful to us. After a forty-year season of wilderness, God's people are finally positioned on the eastern bank of the Jordan River. Once they cross the river they enter into the Promised Land. And this Promised Land represents a shift from the known into the unknown. In the Promised Land there will be hard work to do so that God's people can possess that which is their inheritance. But they have not done this before. It is at this very place, at the threshold of entering into their destiny, that God's instructions through Joshua are critical: follow God's presence (represented by the ark), and consecrate yourselves. The result? “Tomorrow the Lord will do wonders among you.”

We are positioned on the eastern bank of *our* Jordan. Next year we will finally send our first church planters to the nations. And while it is our church planters who will be physically in the nations, this is a collaborative mission. They are on the frontline of the mission but we are their rearguard, supplying them with the munitions of prayer, finances, strategy, care, and equipping so that this mission of *ours* can see long-term fruit. We will all have to roll up our sleeves to do the hard work, partnering with God to win for Jesus the reward of His suffering. But we have not passed this way before. And so like Joshua's generation, we must heed well God's instructions: Follow His presence, going where He goes. Consecrate

ourselves, setting ourselves apart so that we can be wholly used by God. And the result? The Lord will do wonders among us!

Reflection:

- Pray, “Lord, as we position ourselves on the eastern bank of our (Epicentre’s) Jordan, will you show us what’s in the promised land? How do we consecrate ourselves and follow Your presence?” Wait and listen. Journal down what the Spirit shows you. Pray these promises back to God on behalf of Epicentre. *(After your facetime, email what you hear to Fiona at fiona@epicentrechurch.org).*

- Lift up our overseas churchplanting candidates to the Lord:
 - Malawi: Teresa, Jeff & Clara (children: Elijin & Baby #2), Ann, Jeff & Liane
 - Asia: Karen & Mei-leng

Ask the Lord for words of encouragement for them. Furthermore, ask God how He might want you to support them.

- Lift up our West LA churchplanting team to the Lord:
 - Lawrence & Sharon (children: Sammie, Ellie & Ben), Nolan & Elizabeth, Lawton & Lisa (children: Nolan & Daniella), Justin & Ann, Daniel & Christina.

Ask the Lord for words of encouragement for them. Furthermore, ask God how He might want you to support them.

- Spend sometime to thank God for this week of prayer & fasting. Reflect on the highlights of the week and praise God for them. Ask Him to help you continue to live a consecrated lifestyle.

Reprint from Last Week

Fasting Suggestion & Options

Fasting Options

Since this year’s fast is focused on consecration (setting ourselves apart for God), we would like you to pray about fasting from one of the following, in addition to food:

1. Internet (purpose: limiting things we see and read that might crowd out the voice and truth of God)
2. TV/movie/videogames (purpose: cleansing our minds, spirits and hearts, and make room for the Spirit to speak and show us heavenly things)
3. Shopping (purpose: letting God’s word rather than material things satisfy you)
4. Schedule (purpose: carving out more time to be with God in prayer)

We do understand that some people, for health or other reasons, may not be able to participate with us on the food fast. Your participation through non-food fast is still very valuable!