

PRAYER AND FASTING GUIDELINES

Fasting: A Radical, Temporary Measure

Fasting is for this world, for stretching our hearts to get fresh air beyond the pain and trouble around us. And it is for the battle against the sin and weakness inside us. We express our discontent with our sinful selves and our longing for more of Christ.

When Jesus returns, fasting will be done. It's a temporary measure, for this life and age, to enrich our joy in Jesus and prepare our hearts for the next — for seeing him face to face. When he returns, he will not call a fast, but throw a feast; then all holy abstinence will have served its glorious purpose and be seen by all for the stunning gift it was.

Until then, we will fast.

How to Start Fasting

Fasting is hard. It sounds much easier in concept than it proves to be in practice. It can be surprising how on-edge we feel when we miss a meal.

Matthew 6:16-18 (NLT)

¹⁶ “And when you fast, don't make it obvious, as the hypocrites do, for they try to look miserable and dishevelled so people will admire them for their fasting. I tell you the truth, that is the only reward they will ever get. ¹⁷ But when you fast, comb your hair and wash your face. ¹⁸ Then no one will notice that you are fasting, except your Father, who knows what you do in private. And your Father, who sees everything, will reward you.

WHY FAST AND PRAY?

1 | It was a common practice for God's people in Biblical history.

Fasting was a common practice for God's people.

1 Sam 7:5-6 “And Samuel said, ‘Gather all Israel’... and they gathered... and fasted...”

Ezra 8:21-23 “Then I proclaimed a fast... so we fasted, so we might humble ourselves before our God...”

Jesus spoke of a day when there would be a time for fasting.

Matthew 6:16 (not if, but when you fast...) "Moreover when you fast do not be like the hypocrites..." Matthew 9:14-15 "Jesus answered...The time will come when the bridegroom will be taken from them; then they will fast."

Apostle Paul instructed husbands and wives to fast.

1 Corinthians 7:5 "Do not deprive one another except with consent for a time, that you may give yourselves to fasting and prayer..."

"The Church in Acts fasted.

Acts 13:2 "While they were worshiping the Lord and fasting, the Holy Spirit said..." Acts 14:23 "And when they appointed elders for them in each church, and with prayer and fasting..."

2 | It can restore the loss of the "first love" for God and result in a more intimate relationship with Christ.

Joel 2:12 "... turn to me with all your heart, and with fasting, and weeping, and with mourning."

3 | It is a way to truly humble yourself before God.

Psalm 35:13 King David said, "I humble myself through fasting", Ezra 8:21-23 "Then I proclaimed a fast... So we fasted, so we might humble ourselves before our God..."

4 | It enables the Holy Spirit to reveal your spiritual condition, resulting in brokenness, repentance, and a transformed life.

Isaiah 58:6-12

It is a powerful way to seek God for His direction, will, protection, and provision for you and your family.

Ezra 8:21-23

"I proclaimed a fast, so that we might humble ourselves before our God and ask him for a safe journey for us and our children, with all our possessions. . . The gracious hand of our God is on everyone who looks to him. . . So we fasted and petitioned our God about this. . ."

It can result in a dynamic personal revival in your own life and make you a channel of revival to others. Isaiah 58:6-12.

WHAT ARE THE GUIDELINES SET FORTH IN THE BIBLE CONCERNING FASTING?

It is to be done in a manner of humility with a right heart unto Father God, not for public display or seeking the approval of man.

Matt 6:16-18 "Jesus said, 'When you fast do not look sombre like the hypocrites do, for they disfigure their faces to show men they are fasting... But when you fast, put oil on your head and wash your face, so that it will not be obvious to men that you are fasting, but only to your father who is unseen; and your father who sees what is done in secret, will reward you.'"

Luke 18:9-14 "... For everyone who exalts himself will be humbled, and he who humbles himself will be exalted"

Psalms 51: 17 "The sacrifices of God are a broken spirit, a broken and a contrite heart—These O God you will not despise..."

HOW SHOULD YOU FAST?

There are different types of fasting.

Absolute Fast - No water, liquids, or food. Ex: Acts 9 The Apostle Paul went on an absolute fast for three days after his encounter with Jesus. Esther 4:16 The Jews went on an absolute fast for three days/nights. Moses and Elijah went on absolute fasts for 40 days enabled totally supernaturally by God.

Water Only Fast - The max duration seen in the Bible is 40 days. Water-only fasts that last more than several days should be undertaken with plenty of rest and under medical supervision.

Water & Juice Fasting - This type of fasting will provide you with more energy, especially if you are going to fast for an extended period of time.

Partial Fast - Denying yourself certain foods. An example we see in the Bible is Daniel who did not eat bread, meat, or drink any wine for three weeks eating only vegetables, fruit, and drinking water.

Media/Activity Fast - If you cannot fast food safely, instead remove media and outside activity from your life for the week. Take that time to focus on God during the silence that will replace our usual busy loud lives.

HOW TO FAST SAFELY

Start slowly. Fast for one meal a day, or one day a week, or one week a month. Build up your spiritual muscles so that you are able to extend your fasting as the Lord leads you.

In spite of the absolute safety and benefits of fasting, there are people who should NEVER fast without professional supervision.

For example:

- People who are physically too thin or emaciated.
- People who are prone to anorexia, bulimia, or other behavioural disorders.
- Those who suffer weakness or anaemia.
- People with medical issues—tumors, blood diseases, cancer, chronic problems with vital organs.
- Individuals who take Insulin for diabetes.
- Women who are pregnant or nursing.

SPIRITUAL ACTIVITIES YOU SHOULD YOU ADD

Pick one, two, or more ideally, all of these activities to add to your week to replace the item you have removed for the fast.

1 | Read Your Bible

“All Scripture is God-breathed and is useful for teaching, rebuking, correcting and, training in righteousness, so that the man of God may be thoroughly equipped for every good work” says 2 Timothy 3:16-17.

Reading the Word (The Bible) is one way in which we hear God's thoughts while getting clarity and wisdom on His direction for our lives and what's going on around us. The Word of God was written by men but under the guidance of the Holy Spirit. Whenever a Christian reads the Word the Holy Spirit is always present. You have the Author of the Book right inside of you, ask Him to help you understand and have supernatural wisdom and revelation to hear what it is he wants to say to you.

Hebrews 4:12 Says

"The Word of God is powerful and sharper than any two-edged sword, it penetrates even to dividing soul and Spirit, joints and marrow: it judges the thoughts and attitudes of the heart"

The Bible can correct wrong attitudes yet at the same time give us great hope and encouragement to keep going in the Christian faith. There is power in the Word!

2 | Memorize Scripture

It can be helpful to search out scriptures which relate to your specific need to give your insight on what the Word says about your situation.

You may have a help in your bible or you can google it.

Here are a few examples:

Need: Help for Spiritual Warfare

"Submit yourselves to God. Resist the devil, and he will flee from you." James 4:7

Need: Help for negative/destructive thoughts:

"For though we live in the world, we do not wage war as the world does. The weapons we fight with are not the weapons of the world. On the contrary, they have divine power to demolish strongholds. We demolish arguments and every pretension that sets itself up against the knowledge of God, and we take captive every thought to make it obedient to Christ." 2 Cor. 10:3-5

Need: Help for finances:

"And my God will meet all your needs according to His riches in Christ Jesus." Philippians 4:19

It is always powerful when we incorporate the word in our prayers. You can take the scriptures you have searched out and make them your own.

EXAMPLE (using the scriptures from above):

Father,

I submit to you knowing that as I come under your covering and as I resist the devil he will flee from my life. I praise you because no matter what is going on in my life or in the world around me, the weapons I fight with are not of this world. Therefore, I have divine power tear down strongholds that have set

themselves up against me in the spirit. I demolish every strategy of the enemy that has set itself up against the knowledge of God, therefore every thought that does not come from you I take it captive now and make it obedient to the name of Jesus Christ. Amen.

Some useful websites:

WWW.biblegateway.com
www.biblehub.com

3 | Pray

Take time each day to pray. Praying is just talking to God and listening to what He has to say. Make it a practice to establish the same prayer time every day. You will discover it will become a beneficial spiritual habit. While this would help you in sustaining a thriving prayer life God realises that this is not always possible and will meet you where you are at.

Prayer is powerful and an essential part of a healthy Christian's journey in relationship with God.

"Look to the Lord and His strength, Seek His face always". 1 Chronicles 16:11

Have a specific request for this season of prayer and fasting?

It is often easier to fast with a purpose and focal point to spur us on.

FINAL THOUGHTS

There is no formula to fasting. Fasting is about the condition of the heart and being obedient to God's leading. Devote yourself to seeking God, mediating on Him, and worshipping and praising Him for who He is and what He has done. Read His word, pray as often as you can, and God will honour your seeking heart and bless your time with Him in a special way!

So here we go!! Let's surrender our flesh and its worldly desires and enter into a time of spiritual feasting.

Here are some points to help you get started

- Prayerfully identify a fasting pattern that works with your lifestyle.
- Don't be over ambitious, there is no point to prove, just allow the Holy Spirit to guide you. Where you are led by Him you will have sufficient grace to complete what He has laid on your heart.

- Set time aside to pray and read the bible, this is essential for Spiritual feeding and guidance.
- Expect to hear God's voice.
- Keep it low key according to Matthew 6:17-18. You may feel that your fast is very individual and personal to yourself or you may consider fasting with someone else to encourage you.
- Get plenty of rest where you can
- Have a time limit set on your mind to give you focus while being led by God should this change.
- Write down specific requests and note down answers to prayer.
- Keep a journal of the journey, the scriptures God lays on your heart and what you feel God is saying.