



21 DAYS OF PRAYER AND FASTING

We are so glad you have decided to participate in an extended time of prayer, fasting and personal devotion. There really is no better way to reset our spiritual compass and bring about refreshing in every area of our lives than through prayer and fasting. Our hope is that this time of prayer and fasting will refresh you personally but also our church as we seek His blessing and direction.

The Program was intentionally designed to be flexible so that you can participate at any level. Whether you have done a 21-day season of prayer and fasting before, or if this is your first time, you can start where you are and experience what God has in store for you in a powerful way. Daily devotions, scripture reading and suggested prayers are included in this booklet. Please commit to reading them each day. The last week will focus on the ultimate sacrifice Jesus made on the cross and the victory we have through His resurrection.

We pray that you will experience the presence and power of God in an extraordinary way as you commit yourself to Him over the next 21 days. May you become closer to God than ever before as you seek Him first.

As you prepare for the next 21 days, think about why you are fasting. Is it for spiritual renewal, for guidance, for healing, for the resolution of problems, for special grace to handle a difficult situation, or for a major decision? Ask the Holy Spirit to clarify His leading and objectives for your 21 days of prayer and fasting. This will enable you to pray more specifically and strategically. Think about the top two or three most pressing issues on your heart and zone in on those with God. Write these down in the space provided below, and be open to hearing what God wants to show you in those areas.

When praying, make your primary goal to know Jesus more and experience Him. Focus first on what's right about Him, such as His goodness and His greatness, and see everything else through that filter.

Finally, make time to pray daily. Don't overcomplicate this! Just talk to God. Have that place and time where you can seek Him every day. If you don't plan to pray, you won't.

During this fast, I am praying and believing for God to:

WHY FAST?

Fasting has the potential for significant impact in our lives. Through prayer and fasting, the Holy Spirit can transform your life personally and God can speak to you in new and dynamic ways.

Prayer and fasting can also work on a much grander scale. According to Scripture, by our personal experience and observation, we are convinced that when God's people fast with a proper Biblical motive – seeking God's face not His hand – with a broken, repentant, and contrite spirit, God will hear from heaven and heal our lives, our churches, our communities, our nation and world. Prayer and fasting can bring about revival – a change in the direction of our nation, the nations of earth and the fulfillment of the Great Commission.

Biblical fasting is, very simply, denying oneself something for the sake of seeking and honouring God. Pastor Stovall Weems says that "prayer is connecting with God; fasting is disconnecting ourselves from the world." That's a great way to describe the feeling. In addition to food, you can also fast from other things that keep you connected to the world. These may include television, social media, video games and more.

WHY YOU SHOULD FAST:

If you do not already know of the power and importance of fasting, here are some very important facts:

- ◇ Fasting was an expected discipline in both the Old and New Testament eras. For example, Moses fasted at least two recorded 40-day periods. Jesus fasted 40 days and reminded His followers to fast, "when you fast" not "if you fast".
- ◇ Prayer and fasting can restore the loss of the "first love" for your Lord and result in a more intimate relationship with Christ.
- ◇ Fasting is a Biblical way to truly humble yourself in the sight of God (Psalm 35:13; Ezra 8:21). King David said, "I humble myself through fasting."
- ◇ Fasting enables the Holy Spirit to reveal your true spiritual condition, resulting in brokenness, repentance and a transformed life.
- ◇ The Holy Spirit will quicken the Word of God in your heart and His truth will become more meaningful to you!
- ◇ Fasting can transform your prayer life into a richer and more personal experience.
- ◇ Fasting can result in a dynamic personal revival in your own life – and make you a channel of revival to others.

If you fast, you will find yourself being humbled. You will discover more time to pray and seek God's face. And as He leads you to recognize and repent of unconfessed sin, you will experience special blessings from God.

HOW TO FAST

As you prepare to fast, it is important to choose a fasting plan that works for you. While this section provides some general information about different types of fasts, as well as some suggestions on how to create your own fasting plan, it is important to mention that there is nothing more spiritual about one type of fast as opposed to another. These are simply guidelines and suggestions on different things you can do.

Fasting can include food, social media and entertainment, among other things. It should be something you are accustomed to so that it stretches you to give it up. Giving it up for a period of time enables one to focus on God. For example, when those hunger pangs happen, turn to prayer. When you usually watch your television shows, open your Bible to read and pray instead. Fast from social media or watching sports so you can focus on God.

Don't let what you eat or do not eat become the focus of your fast. Our focus should be on drawing closer to God. Remember, this is a time to disconnect enough from your regular patterns and habits in order to connect more closely to God.

Here are a few tips to keep in mind before getting started.

1. START WHERE YOU ARE:

We are all at different places in our walk with God. Likewise our jobs, daily schedules and health conditions are all different and place various levels of demand on our energy. So most importantly, whether you've fasted before or this is your first time, start where you are. Your personal fast should present a level of challenge to it, but it's very important to know your own body, know your options and, most importantly, seek God in prayer and follow what that Holy Spirit leads you to do.

Remember, the goal of fasting is not just to do without food or Facebook. The goal is to draw nearer to God.

2. MAKE YOUR COMMITMENT

Pray about the kind of fast you should undertake. Jesus encouraged us to fast (Matthew 6:16-18). For Him it was a matter of when believers fast, not if they would do it. Before you fast, we encourage you to decide up front the type of fast God wants you to undertake and how much time each day you will devote to prayer and reading God's Word. Making these commitments ahead of time will help sustain your fast when physical temptations and life's pressures tempt you to abandon it.

You may choose to fast all 21 days. Or you may choose to fast several days out of the 21 days, such as three or four days a week throughout the 21-day period. Maybe you will do that and do three to seven consecutive days at the end. This is your personal decision and should be prayerfully considered as it applies to your circumstances.

It is important to fast in a way that works for you. The goal is that you choose a fast that will be challenging for you but will work within your life. You should choose a plan that will cause you to rely on God and will create space in your life for Him to work.

SPECIFIC FOOD OR ACTIVITY FAST:

In this type of fast you omit a specific item(s) from your meal plans. For example, you may choose to eliminate all red meat, processed or fast food, or sweets. Most people can incorporate this type of fast relatively easily. It can also prove to be a great solution for people with specific dietary needs or medical conditions that may cause certain limitations.

While fasting typically refers to refraining from specific food items, you may also find it extremely beneficial to fast from a regular activity or habit. This might include things such as television, social media and the like.

Prayer and fasting are about both connecting to God and disconnecting from the world. Try to tune out some of the regular distractions from your day as much as possible. Replace that time with things that will nourish you spiritually.

DANIEL FAST:

The Daniel fast is a great model to follow and one that is extremely effective for spiritual focus, bodily discipline and purification of the body and soul. It is probably one of the most commonly referred-to fasts; however, within the Daniel fast there is room for broad interpretation.

In the book of Daniel we find two different times where the prophet Daniel fasted. In Daniel 1, it states that he ate only vegetables and water, and in Daniel 10, while the passage does not give a specific list of foods that Daniel ate, it does state that he ate no rich (or choice) foods, as well as no red meat or wine. So based on these two verses, we can see that either of these, or combinations of the two, constitute a Daniel fast.

Again, it is important to mention that there is nothing inherently spiritual about one type of fast as opposed to another. The foundation of the Daniel fast is fruits and vegetables. Some starchy vegetables and dairy could be included, but that depends on the individual. Your goal should be to seek God in prayer about this and follow what the Holy Spirit leads you to do.

JUICE FAST:

A juice fast is simply consuming vegetable and fruit juices and water instead of solid food. Many people include whey protein in their liquid plan as well. Even if you choose not to make your entire fast liquids-only, substituting one or two meals for liquids could be a great alternative.

FASTING SAFELY:

As you begin your fast, you may hear from concerned loved ones and friends who urge you to protect your health. And they are right. You should protect your health. But we want to encourage you that if done properly, fasting will not only prove to be a spiritual blessing, but a physical blessing as well.

You may, however, have a physical problem that would make fasting unwise or dangerous. This could include tumors, cancer, blood diseases, diabetes or heart disease. If that is the case, include your doctor in your decision on how to fast. Also, if you are under any type of medication, you may want to talk with your doctor before changing your regime.

FASTING WHILE NURSING OR PREGNANT:

Strict fasting while nursing or pregnant is not recommended. If you are in this season of life, here are some great options for you to consider – with the approval of your physician:

- ◇ a modified Daniel fast including whole grains, legumes, whey protein, calcium and iron supplements
- ◇ fasting sweets and desserts
- ◇ fasting red meat
- ◇ fasting non-food activities like television, Facebook/Twitter, movies, etc.

FASTING AND EATING DISORDERS:

If you have struggled with an eating disorder, this situation is a battle that you can win through Christ (Philippians 4:13). Remember, fasting is a tool used to get closer to God, and it actually should keep us from being preoccupied with food. If your method of fasting is going to cause you to obsess about what you eat in any way, you will either need to change your approach or your mindset.

If giving up food is a stumbling block to you, then consider fasting of TV, Facebook, reading (other than the Bible), or shopping. There are many distractions and ways that we use to stay in control that we could eliminate from our daily routine. If you can identify such other things, maybe you can give those up instead of food.

Remember that you are covered by God's grace. God will show you what to do and give you His peace.

3. BEGINNING AND ENDING YOUR FAST WELL:

Depending on the type of fast you choose, it may be important to prepare your body ahead of time before beginning the fast. Take a week or so to transition into your fast; otherwise it may be difficult on your body. For example, if you would like to go on a fruits and vegetables or juice fast, start eliminating meat, white grains, and refined sugars from your diet the week before. Also you may want to start to cut back on dairy products and some of your caffeine intake.

The same principle applies to breaking your fast. When your fast is over, add foods back in very gradually. You won't want to break your fast with a greasy cheeseburger!

The goal for this 21-day fast is that you would experience a new intimacy in your relationship with God. As you prepare to begin, we encourage you to prepare your heart spiritually. The foundation for prayer and fasting is repentance. Unconfessed sin can hinder your prayers.

Here are several things you can do to prepare your heart:

Remember that God is your Father and He loves you and is for you.

- ◇ Confess every sin that the Holy Spirit calls to your remembrance and accept God's forgiveness - (1 John 1:9).
- ◇ Seek forgiveness from people whom you have offended, and forgive those who have hurt you (Mark 11:25; Luke 11:4; 17:3,4).

- ◇ Ask God to fill you with His Holy Spirit according to his command in Ephesians 5:18 and His promise in 1 John 5:14,15.
- ◇ Surrender your life fully to Jesus Christ as your Lord; refuse to obey your worldly nature (Romans 12:1,2).
- ◇ Begin your time of prayer and fasting with an expectant heart (Hebrews 11:6).
- ◇ Do not underestimate spiritual opposition. Satan sometimes intensifies the natural battle between body and spirit (Galatians 5:16,17).

4. FINAL FASTING TIPS:

- ◇ Keep your fridge and pantry stocked with the items you need. Being unprepared to fast sets you up to give into temptation.
- ◇ Make it a priority to attend church, prayer meetings and connect groups during your 21-day fast. Being around other believers will encourage you to keep on going when fasting gets difficult.
- ◇ If you are fasting with others, you may want to meet together in a small-group setting. You can share what God is showing you in your devotional time as well as spend time in prayer together.
- ◇ If you mess up, don't get discouraged. Just get right back on track and keep going. God's mercies "are new every morning" (Lamentations 3:22-23). He wants you to finish, and He will give you the grace and strength to do it!
- ◇ Journaling: We encourage you on a daily basis to write down what God is saying to you, how you are feeling and changes you are aware of. Changes will take place! We believe God will speak to everybody during this time of prayer and fasting. He may speak to you during the day or the night-time, so be ready with pen and paper or notebook in anticipation of hearing God's voice.

If you sincerely humble yourself before the Lord, repent, pray and seek God's face; if you consistently meditate on His word, you will experience a heightened awareness of His presence (John 14:21). The Lord will give you fresh, new spiritual insights. Your confidence and faith in God will be strengthened and you will feel refreshed. Our prayer is that this will be a significant time in your life where you experience God's presence like never before!