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FASTING GUIDE

**LEARNING TO
FAST**

"...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....So we fasted and petitioned our God about this, and He answered our prayer."

EZRA 8:21-23

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Dear Reader,

From the earliest days of our church, the practice of fasting has been a key commitment for us. In fact, the longstanding tradition of our church is to begin every new year with a church-wide 21 day fast. We do this because we believe fasting is a powerful ally and catalyst for spiritual growth. For this reason, we are committed to teaching and practicing fasting.

We believe that fasting isn't just a practice for the "super-spiritual," but is something that Jesus expects every believer to do (Matt 6:16). Through fasting, we engage in something unnatural (going without food) to make room for God to do something in us that's supernatural (creating a hunger and thirst for righteousness) (Matt 5:6). Fasting, whether individually or collectively, holds immense significance, releasing God's blessing and power over our lives, families, businesses, church, and communities.

As you read the following pages, you will find some helpful information to help you get started with fasting. I pray the Holy Spirit will draw you in and speak to you as you consider your involvement in a special time of seeking God.

Be blessed!

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'Paul Valo', written in a cursive style.

Paul Valo
Lead Pastor

FASTING: WHAT IT IS AND ISN'T

FASTING IS



- A personal decision to refrain from consuming food, beverages, and/or other indulgences for a specific duration with the purpose of seeking God.
- An opportunity to relinquish an appetite – whether for food, media, entertainment, etc. Fasting serves as a cleansing process, creating space for intentional pursuit of God's will and grace, transcending ordinary patterns of worship and prayer.
- A method to diminish the distractions of the world, enabling a clearer reception of God's voice; fasting empowers us to release worldly attachments and embrace the teachings of Jesus.

FASTING ISN'T



- A burden. Fasting is described as an opportunity to receive a reward rather than an obligation to fulfill a requirement. In essence, it's not solely about letting go but preparing to seize something greater.
- An instant answer. Fasting is not a magical assurance that God will respond simply because we engage in it. Attempting to manipulate God's will through self-denial in fasting is futile. Isaiah 58:3-7 warns that fasting may achieve nothing if one does not align with God's desires. Fasting doesn't inherently bestow piety or holiness, and it doesn't earn favor with God (Matthew 6:16; Luke 18:9-14).

WHY SHOULD I FAST?

Fasting is a powerful reminder that we are more than just physical beings, we are also spiritual. By abstaining from food, we willingly sacrifice some of our physical comfort in order to focus on the nourishment and guidance of God. This allows us to better hear and attend to His voice, and helps us connect with our spirituality on a deeper level.

Biblically, fasting has a mixed history. It is mentioned more than seventy times throughout Scriptures, and was a common practice in both the Old and New Testament. Throughout the Bible, God's people fasted for a variety of reasons. While the specifics of these fasts vary, the common denominator is that each example occurred when God's people were in need of an increased awareness of God's presence.

Traditionally, fasting has been a powerful tool when in need of revival, change, clarity/direction, divine intervention, breakthrough, healing (of any kind), deliverance from demonic forces, or a desire for closeness and intimacy with God.

REASONS TO FAST

- 1. A deeper friendship with God (John 6:27)**

Fasting leads us to develop a deeper, more intimate friendship with God. God is never a means to an end; He is THE end.
- 2. Renewed hunger for heavenly things (Matt 5:6)**

As we empty our stomachs physically, we often become more aware of the emptiness in our souls. As we begin to pay attention to the hunger pangs, the Lord often awakens us to the true hunger pangs of our hearts.
- 3. Soul training for self-denial (Mark 8:34)**

Fasting is not about being miserable for the sake of God but about making space for more of God. Self-denial is a natural response of our heart when we begin to believe that only Jesus knows what is truly best for us in this life and in the next.
- 4. Intimacy, security, and strength (Luke 4:1-14)**

The Scriptures surface a clear connection between intimacy with God, security in our identity, and the strength needed to live holy lives in the face of temptation.
- 5. Clarity in prayer (Daniel 10 & Isaiah 58)**

A potential breakthrough often comes by way of answered prayer. In seasons of prayer and fasting, you can experience levels of refreshment and clarity.
- 6. Humility for revival (2 Chronicles 7:14)**

Humility is a magnet for the presence of God and fasting has a way of bringing us low.
- 7. Freedom from demonic strongholds (Mark 9:9)**

Many people may begin experiencing freedom from demonic strongholds in the context of prayer and fasting.

TYPES OF FAST

The Bible connects fasting specifically to abstaining from food. The human need for food is so great, fasting from food is a natural way to refocus our hearts to the Creator instead of the created (food).

Biblical fasts vary in duration and scope. In scripture, the lengths of fasts range from an afternoon to 40 days, and the types of fasts vary from giving up of certain types of food to fasts that call for refraining from food altogether. The type or length of your fast is not as important as the practice of fasting itself.

The big idea is that as we give up something, we replace that desire with time in the presence of God. In whatever fast you choose to participate, do so in a way that clearly replaces those items with prayer and demonstrates that you are sacrificing one thing for something that is better. The sacrifice in itself is not the point. The point is the intentional orientation of our time and attention towards God. We encourage you to seek God to lead you in the specifics of how you fast.

TYPES OF FASTS

1. **Total Fast**

Abstaining from food or drink for twenty-four consecutive hours or more (Matt. 4:2, Acts 9:9, Esther 4:15-16). Check with your doctor as this type of fasting requires a certain level of physical health.

2. **Partial Fast (Jewish Fast)**

Abstaining from food for a certain period of time – eating only at a set time of the day (i.e., 6am-3pm or sunup to sundown). Most people drink liquids during the day and have one small meal after sundown each evening.

3. **Daniel Fast**

A 21-day fast inspired by the biblical account of Daniel. It involves a plant-based diet, excluding meat, dairy, and sweets, with an emphasis on whole grains, fruits, vegetables, nuts, and legumes.

4. **Selective Fast**

Giving up only certain types of food and/or drink during the course of your fast.

5. **Soul Fast**

Fasting from things other than food, like social media, television, shopping, certain entertainment activities, physical intimacy with a spouse (in line with 1 Corinthians 7:5).

HOW TO FAST

Before starting your fast, seek the Holy Spirit's guidance for both your attitude and actions. Isaiah 1:13 emphasizes God's preference for heartfelt devotion over external rituals. Plan your fast with a focus on genuine heart engagement rather than mere sacrifice.

The essence of fasting is cultivating a devoted heart for God, transcending external religious activities. God values the condition of your heart over outward appearances. The goal of fasting is to deepen your love for God, gain His perspective on the world, and enhance your readiness to obey. Avoid fixating on the mechanics of fasting; its purpose is to draw you closer to God. As Jesus expressed, the essence of fasting lies in this pursuit:

Whenever you fast, don't be gloomy like the hypocrites. For they disfigure their faces so that their fasting is obvious to people. Truly I tell you, they have their reward. But when you fast, put oil on your head and wash your face, so that your fasting isn't obvious to others but to your Father who is in secret. And your Father who sees in secret will reward you.

MATHEW 6:16-18 (CSB)

PREPARING FOR YOUR FAST

The following steps are from Dr. Bill Bright's, *7 Basic Steps to Successful Fasting and Prayer*.

- 1. Set an Objective for your Fast**
Ask yourself the question: Why am I fasting? Is it for spiritual renewal? For healing? For major life decisions? Ask God to lead you in setting an objective.
- 2. Commit Your Fast**
Pray about the kind of fast God wants you to undertake. In scripture, it wasn't a matter of if, but when, God's people would fast.
- 3. Prepare Yourself Spiritually**
The foundation of fasting and prayer is repentance. Unconfessed sin will hinder your prayers. Spend time with God before you begin your fast to confess your sins and prepare your heart.
- 4. Prepare Yourself Physically**
Don't rush into your fast. Prepare your body by eating smaller meals before starting a fast. Consult your physician before you begin a fast of meal(s) if you take prescription medication or have a chronic ailment.
- 5. Put Yourself on a Schedule**
Set aside ample time to be alone with the Lord during your fast. The more time you spend with God, the more meaningful your fast will be.
- 6. Break Your Fast Gradually**
If God leads you to fast for multiple days, how you break your fast is important for your physical well-being. Gradually return to regular eating with several small healthy snacks.
- 7. Expect Results From Your Fast**
Pray that God will give you fresh spiritual insights during your fast. Pray that your faith will be deepened and strengthened.

A DAY OF FASTING

By abstaining from food throughout the day you can incorporate additional activities to draw you closer to the Lord. Below are a few suggestions:



MORNING

Setting the tone for your entire day begins with the time you spend with the Lord. Here's a personal routine suggestion:

- Start your day by expressing praise and worship, whether through music or reading the Psalms.
- Dive into a book of the Bible for reflection and meditation.
- Open your heart in prayer, inviting the Holy Spirit to examine and search your life.



MIDDAY

Take advantage of your lunch break to connect with God and realign your will with His.

- Spend time reading and meditating on Scripture.
- Consider taking a short prayer walk for reflection.
- Connect with others who are fasting; come together for prayer, Scripture reading, and worship.



EVENING

Conclude your day with some unhurried time with God.

- Minimize outside distractions like television, internet, or social media.
- Devote time to solitary prayer, ideally on your knees in a quiet room.
- Reflect on your fasting journey, jotting down your thoughts in a journal.

FASTING RESOURCES

In Isaiah 58, God expresses his contempt for the fasting of Israel. In his rebuke, God points out that although Israel was going through the motions of fasting, their hearts were not in it. Offended by their fast, God declared, “Is this the type of fasting that I have chosen?” (Is 58:5).

True fasting requires the participant to humble themselves before God, to reflect on their own life, and to surrender anything in their life that doesn’t honor God. This type of fasting can only take place when accompanied by prayer and worship.

Through prayer, we invite the Holy Spirit to reveal in us what we otherwise might not see. The Holy Spirit is our counselor and helps shape us into God’s image (John 14:26-28).

Through worship, we make much of God and less of us. This shift in perspective makes it easier for us to trust God to do what we cannot do and reminds us of his ultimate control. In the pages that follow, you will find some resources to help you pray, worship, and reflect as you fast.

PRAYER TOPICS

A major part of fasting is intentionally starving your flesh of something it craves. By denying our flesh, we become more aware of God and the world around us. Fasting is a powerful tool to help us move from selfishness to selflessness.

In your prayer time during your fast, be intentional to direct your prayers beyond yourself. Ask the Holy Spirit to give you the eyes and heart of Jesus, whose life and mission was to serve the world around him (Matt 20:28). By praying for the world, our heart for the world grows.

My Local Church

1. For God's work through me this year
2. For God's favor on families in my church
3. For children in my church to know God
4. For teenagers and college students in my church to know God
5. For God to create strong families in my church
6. For God to give my church a heart for the lost
7. For God's wisdom and direction on my church's leadership

My Community

1. For my government officials
2. For first responders in my community
3. For public & private school teachers in my community
4. For the lost in my community to know God
5. For those dealing with mental health issues
6. For financial provision for the struggling
7. For God's favor to be on our community

The World

1. For an outpouring of the Spirit on the global church
2. For peace for those in conflict
3. For freedom for the oppressed and downtrodden
4. For provision for those without
5. For the salvation of those who are lost
6. For the global efforts of God's people
7. For Christ to prepare his bride for his coming

QUESTIONS FOR REFLECTION

Reflection and meditation is an important part of a healthy prayer life. Prayer is not just about talking to God, it's also about listening. When you pray, take time to ask the Holy Spirit to teach you and reveal things about yourself. In the words of the Psalmist, *“Search me, God, and know my heart; test me and know my anxious thoughts. See if there is any offensive way in me, and lead me in the way everlasting.”* (Ps 139:23-24)

1. What sin is the Holy Spirit bringing to light? What sins do you need to confess to Him?
2. Who else do you need to confess your sin(s) to? (James 5:16)
3. Who do you need to forgive? Who do you need to go and reconcile with? (Matthew 5:23-24)
4. When you feel empty or restless, what do you do to try to fill the emptiness? What does this tell you about your heart?
5. What feelings arise in you when you spend time in prayer instead of eating, watching TV, etc.?
6. What thoughts or worldly cares interrupt your prayer, your sleep?
7. What is the Holy Spirit revealing to you about your temptations? What is He asking you to give up or let go?
8. What idols is the Lord revealing to you? Are you willing to surrender and repent from them?
9. What do you fear the most? What are your anxious thoughts? Do you need to confess them and cast them upon Jesus? (1 Peter 5:6-7)
10. Where do you operate from an entitlement mentality? How can you wean yourself from this way of life?
11. What changes or breakthroughs do you hope to experience as a result of fasting?
12. Are you seeking God's will for your life? If so, what is it?
13. Do you know what your calling/purpose is?
14. How are you using your time, talent and resources for the Kingdom of God?

TOPICAL SCRIPTURES

Burdens

Nehemiah 1:1-2:1-9; Lamentations 3:1-66; Matthew 11:28-30

Crisis/Need

1 Kings 17:2-16; Luke 4: 24-27; 6:38; Proverbs 11:25;
Acts 20:35; Matthew 7:7-12; Philippians 4:16-19; Ecclesiastes 11:1-6;
Psalm 50:14-15

Deliverance

2 Corinthians 10:3-5; Romans 7:14-25; Matthew 3:31-32, 17:14-21;
Mark 9:14-29

Future Spouse

Genesis 24:1-67

Guidance

Ezra 8:21-34; Proverbs 16:9; Romans 4:20-21; 1 John 2:20; John 16:13;
Hebrews 4:12

Healing

Exodus 15:26; Deut. 32:29; Psalm 103:1-3; Exodus 23:25;
Luke 8:43-48; 2 Chronicles 16:12-13; Isaiah 58:1-11; 1 Samuel 1:3-20;
James 5:16; Matthew 9:1-6; 2 Samuel 12:1-23; James 5:13-15

Intimacy

Matthew 9:15; 6:16-18; Revelation 3:15-22; James 4:8; Psalm 42:1-2;
139:23-24; Luke 2:36-38

Justice:

Isaiah 58; James 5:1-6; 1 John 3:17; 4:20; Luke 10:25-37

Marriage:

Isaiah 58:1-11; 1 Corinthians 7:1-5; Matthew 9:14-17; Genesis 22:1-12

Ministry/Calling

Acts 13:1-5; 14:21-23

TOPICAL SCRIPTURES

Praise/Thanksgiving

Psalms 34, 118, 100:4, 105:1-3

Protection

James 4:1-10; 2 Chronicles 20:1-30; 1 Samuel 17:1-54;
2 Kings 6: 8-23; Esther.

Purity/Holiness

Genesis 39:1-23

Revival

Joel 1:1-2:32; James 4:5-10; Jonah 3:1-107

Spiritual Warfare

Luke 4:1-13; Deut. :1-3; Habakkuk 3:17-19; Philippians 4:12-13

Suffering

John 16:33; Job, James 5:11; John 11:1; Romans 12:2; 2 Corinthians 10:5;
12:7-10; 1 Peter 5:10-11; James 5:13-15

For the word of God is alive and active. Sharper than any double-edged sword, it penetrates even to dividing soul and spirit, joints and marrow; it judges the thoughts and attitudes of the heart.

HEBREWS 4:12 (NIV)

For no matter how many promises God has made, they are “Yes” in Christ. And so through him the “Amen” is spoken by us to the glory of God.

2 CORINTHIANS 1:20 (NIV)

PERSONAL FAST PLAN

Fasting is not about doing something exceptional in the hopes of getting God's attention. Fasting is about emptying ourselves and leaning into God's promise that if we draw near to Him, then He will draw near to us (James 4:8).

As you get ready for your fast, use this section to prepare your mind and heart for what you would like the Lord to do in your life.

MY FAST

TYPE OF FAST _____

LENGTH OF FAST _____

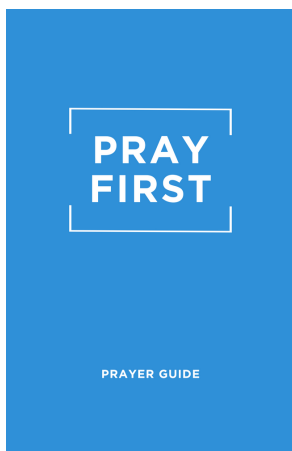
PURPOSE OF FAST _____

COMPANION PRODUCT

Prayer isn't just a part of fasting – prayer is the main event. Fasting without prayer is like a ship without a compass; fasting allows us to hear God's voice clearer, but its through prayer that God actually speaks to us and gives us direction for our life.

When you're skipping meals, prayer its through prayer that we partake of the Bread of Life (John 6:35) Think of it as a soul recharge – the secret sauce that turns fasting into a powerful, personal journey.

As you fast, check out our companion product **Pray First**. This prayer guide was written not just to teach you how to pray but to help you discover the beauty of daily conversation with God.



PRAY FIRST

Discover the power of prayer in our free e-book! Scan the link to download.



