

FASTING GUIDE

WHAT IS FASTING AND WHY IS IT IMPORTANT?

“Fasting is not so much about food as it is about focus. It’s not so much about saying no to the body as it is about saying yes to God.”

- Lance Witt

The Bible is clear that there is power in our prayers when they are coupled with fasting. Throughout history, God’s people united in prayer and fasting to seek God’s favor, deliverance, direction, or provision:

- Moses fasted before he received the Ten Commandments (Exodus 34:28)
- God’s people fasted when they were under attack from their enemies (2 Chronicles 20:3)
- David fasted in mourning and repentance (2 Samuel 12:16)
- Ezra led the nation in prayer and fasting for protection and success in building the temple (Ezra 8:21)
- God’s people fasted when Esther went before the king to win their deliverance (Esther 4:16)
- Daniel fasted and prayed for God’s mercy on the nation (Daniel 9:3)
- Nehemiah fasted before beginning the rebuilding of the walls of Jerusalem (Nehemiah 1:4)
- Jesus fasted during his victory over temptation (Matthew 4:2)
- The early church fasted to receive direction in their decisions (Acts 13:2-3)
- The apostle Paul fasted when appointing leaders for the church (Acts 14:23)

Jesus not only practiced fasting, he also taught us to fast. In the middle of the Sermon of the Mount, Jesus said this:

“When you fast, do not look somber as the hypocrites do, for they disfigure their faces to show men they are fasting. I tell you the truth, they have received their reward in full. 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.”

MATTHEW 6:16-18 (NIV)

Notice Jesus doesn't say *if* you fast. He says *when* you fast. He assumed we would do it, so he taught the proper attitude about fasting.

A biblical fast means to reduce or eliminate food intake for a specific period of time for the purpose of seeking God. The proper way to fast is to use the time you would have spent preparing, eating and sharing a meal to feast (reflect) on some Bible verses and talk to the Lord. Think of it this way: How long would it take you to have lunch with a friend? And what would you do when you had lunch together? You would eat and talk. Think of reading the Word as the eating part of the meal and prayer as the conversational part of the meal. Take your time. Don't eat too fast. Read the Scriptures slowly. And don't rush the conversation. Instead, enjoy God's company. Give God your full attention and tell him why you are fasting.

There are many ways to fast. You can abstain from food and drinks (keep drinking water though!) for one or more days. You can fast just from food. You can do a partial fast from certain foods (sometimes called a Daniel fast). If fasting is new for you, you might just try fasting from one meal. Fast during your lunch break and use that time to "feast" on the Lord. Go out to your car, sit at your desk, or go for a walk, but use that time to read your Bible and talk to God in prayer.

Fasting is truly a way to focus on God – spirit, soul and body.