

YOUR GUIDE TO PRAYER & FASTING

Fasting is not a work to gain merit, but a weapon to gain ground!

WHAT IS 'PRAYER AND FASTING'?

Prayer and fasting is defined as voluntarily going without food in order to focus on prayer and fellowship with God. Prayer and fasting often go hand in hand, but this is not always the case. You can pray without fasting, and fast without prayer. It is when these two activities are combined and dedicated to God's glory that they reach their full effectiveness. Having a dedicated time of prayer and fasting is not a way of manipulating God into doing what you desire. Rather, it is simply forcing yourself to focus and rely on God for the strength, provision, and wisdom you need.

A day of Fasting and Prayer is a voluntary activity, and it is always appropriate for God's people to set aside devoted time to bring an event, family members and other things to the Lord.

WHAT DOES THE BIBLE SAY ABOUT IT?

Prayer and fasting in the Old Testament

- Moses fasted during the 40 days and 40 nights he was on Mount Sinai receiving the law from God (Exodus 34:28).
- King Jehoshaphat called for a fast in all Israel when they were about to be attacked by the Moabites and Ammonites (2 Chronicles 20:3).
- In response to Jonah's preaching, the men of Nineveh fasted and put on sackcloth (Jonah 3:5).
- Prayer and fasting was often done in times of distress or trouble.
- David fasted when he learned that Saul and Jonathan had been killed (2 Samuel 1:12).
- Nehemiah had a time of prayer and fasting upon learning that Jerusalem was still in ruins (Nehemiah 1:4).
- Darius, the king of Persia, fasted all night after he was forced to put Daniel in the den of lions (Daniel 6:18)

Prayer and fasting in the New Testament

- Anna "worshipped night and day, fasting and praying" at the Temple (Luke 2:37).
- John the Baptist taught his disciples to fast (Mark 2:18).
- Jesus fasted for 40 days and 40 nights before His temptation by Satan (Matthew 4:2).
- The church of Antioch fasted (Acts 13:2) and sent Paul and Barnabas off on their first missionary journey (Acts 13:3).
- Paul and Barnabas spent time in prayer and fasting for the appointment of elders in the churches (Acts 14:23).

IS IT REQUIRED OR RECOMMENDED?

The purpose of Christian fasting should be to take our eyes off the things of this world and focus our thoughts on God.

By taking our eyes off the things of this world through prayer and biblical fasting, we can focus better on Christ.

- **Matthew 6:16-18** declares, "When you fast, do not look sombre 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."
- **Isaiah 58: 6-7** "Is not this the kind of fasting I have chosen: to loose the chains of injustice and untie the cords of the yoke, to set the oppressed free and break every yoke? 7 Is it not to share your food with the hungry and to provide the poor wanderer with shelter – when you see the naked, to clothe them, and not to turn away from your own flesh and blood?"

WHAT DOES IT ACCOMPLISH?

- 1 John 5:14-15 tells us, "This is the confidence we have in approaching God: that if we ask anything according to his will, he hears us. And if we know that he hears us - whatever we ask - we know that we have what we

asked of him." In the prophet Isaiah's time, the people grumbled that they had fasted, yet God did not answer in the way they wanted

- 'if my people, who are called by my name, will humble themselves and pray and seek my face and turn from their wicked ways, then will I hear from heaven and will forgive their sin and will heal their land.' - 2 Chronicles 7:1 - IF we humble ourselves, Pray, Seek HIS face, Repent, then God will Hear from heaven; Forgive our sin, Heal our land
- Isaiah 58: 8 -13 "Then your light will break forth like the dawn, and your healing will quickly appear; then your righteousness will go before you, and the glory of the Lord will be your rear guard. Then you will call, and the Lord will answer; you will cry for help, and he will say: Here am I. "If you do away with the yoke of oppression, with the pointing finger and malicious talk and if you spend yourselves in behalf of the hungry and satisfy the needs of the oppressed, then your light will rise in the darkness, and your night will become like the noonday....."
- Fasting expresses that we will not be governed by any appetite other than our appetite for God
- Fasting expresses our desire and hunger to draw near to God
- Fasting expresses our dependence on Christ – He is the Bread of Life – He is all that we need
- Fasting expresses a longing for a move of God, salvation, healing, a powerful move of God, revival
- Fasting expresses a laying down of personal agenda to submit to God's plans and purposes

COMMUNITY CHURCH PRAYER AND FASTING (TIPS TO CONSIDER)

- Fasting from what you can fast from is more important than fasting from what you can't fast from.
- Have you fasted before? If no, it is wise to start with a shorter period of time and work up to fasting for longer durations. You could consider doing a partial fast. A partial fast is to omit certain foods from your diet and/or limit your meals. There is always something we can omit from our menu, in that respect this is a fast everyone can participate in. **Anyone with any medical conditions should consult their doctor prior to starting a partial fast or speak to the Elders for support and advice.**
- If you have fasted before and you do not have a medical condition, then we will recommend a normal fast. A normal fast is not eating any solid food, consuming only clear liquids, such as fruit juices and clear soups (broths). This is where you truly humble yourself before God and subdue your body. This is also known as a 'cleansing fast' and the fast with the greatest physical benefit. **We would recommend this as normal practice** and suggest that especially during our corporate times of prayer you join with us in this.
- If you are considering an extended fasting period (such as when we hold our annual 10 days of Prayer and Fasting), it might be better to fast on days when you don't have high-energy obligations, like speaking to a large crowd or participating in an exercise class etc. Plan your fasting days either consecutively or alternate days. We do not recommend long periods of fasting unless you are experienced in shorter periods of fasting and God has specifically laid this upon your heart. Please speak to the Elders before embarking on long periods of fasting.
- During our corporate prayer seasons it would be good to agree with your Life Group members to fast on the same day so that you can encourage one another in prayer.
- How about fasting once a month to coincide with our monthly corporate prayer meetings?
- Prayer and Fasting is a period of feeding the inner man, the spirit man inside us. Ensure you spend lots of time studying & reading the Scripture. Keep a notebook with you and record your prayers, requests, supplications and all that is revealed to you by the Lord so that we can share testimony of His goodness. Expect God's power in action during this period.

If you have any questions please speak to your Life Group Leader or one of the Elders