



## **ABOUT FASTING AND PRAYER**

*“And when you fast, do not look gloomy like the hypocrites...anoint your head and wash your face, that your fasting may not be seen by others but by your Father who is in secret. And your Father who sees in secret will reward you.” (Matthew 6:16-18 ESV)*

### **A MEANS OF GRACE**

John Wesley, the founder of the Methodist Movement in the Church of England, described fasting and prayer in his 1746 sermon as a "Means of Grace." Wesley defined the means of grace as "outward signs, words, or actions, ordained of God, and appointed for this end, to be the ordinary channels whereby he might convey to men preventing, justifying, and or sanctifying grace." These are practiced privately and collectively, establishing and advancing "the mind that was in Christ" (Philippians 2:5).

### **WHAT IS FASTING?**

Fasting is primarily defined as refraining from eating food; however, when fasting is exercised as a means of grace, it is beyond food. It is the abstinence from what is pleasurable to the flesh and what satisfies and keeps the natural appetite actively alive. For example, money, social media, shopping, food, and others feed the natural appetite. Fasting and prayer transform from simply abstinence and communication to having spiritual implications when the Spirit of God is infused. That is why Jesus said in Matthew 17:21 KJV, "Howbeit this kind goeth not out but by prayer and fasting." Fasting must be accompanied by prayer to transition it from natural to supernatural. You can go without food, but it will not be spiritual fasting. Fasting can never be spiritually meaningful without prayer.

### **WHAT IS PRAYER?**

Prayer is the believer's means of communication and contact with God, which helps strengthen and develop our relationship with Him. Prayer is two-way communication: we speak to God, and then we listen to hear from Him, sitting quietly in His presence.

Types of Prayer: There are different types of prayer for different circumstances. Jesus used different prayers for different needs and circumstances. We must be intentional as well to reap the best prayer benefits.

1. Prayer of Agreement - Matthew 18:19
2. Prayer of Faith - Mark 11:24
3. Prayer of Repentance - 2 Chronicles 7:14



4. Prayer of Intercession – Romans 8:26
5. Prayer of Praise – Psalm 100:1-2
6. Prayer of Submission – 1 Peter 5

### **THE ACTS PRAYER MODEL**

This method of prayer serves as an outline or guide for prayer so you can organize your thoughts and requests. The acronym ACTS stands for adoration, confession, thanksgiving, and supplication. This model of prayer prioritizes our time with God, so we first approach Him with reverence (adoration), then repent of the sin in our life (confession), then express our gratitude to Him for all He has done (thanksgiving), and finally submit to Him our requests (supplication).

### **WHY FAST?**

In Matthew 6, Jesus gave us specific directions on how to live as a child of God. That pattern addressed three specific duties of a Christian: Giving, Praying, and Fasting. Jesus said, “When you give,” “when you pray,” “when you fast.” He clarified that fasting, like giving and praying, was a regular part of Christian life.

Unless it is an intentional discipline, many do not engage in a spiritual fast unless it is called corporately. Realistically, no one, however, can “put” you on a fast. Fasting is a self-imposed abstinence for a period of time. It must be voluntary, or it is ineffective. This is why many of our attitudes are upside down when it is time to fast: our perspective of this time of discipline is wrong.

The attitude of the faster should be one of anticipation. We cannot view fasting as simply afflicting the body but rather freeing the spirit to hear, see, and understand the things of God. Bishop Norman Wagner once wrote, “To engage in a fast unto God against your will is a contradiction of terms; it is not an acceptable sacrifice.” Fasting must be accompanied by resolve.

### **WHAT DO I NEED TO GET DURING THIS FAST?**

1. God – Without Him and His direction, this time of consecration is not a spiritual sacrifice.
2. Faith Goals – State your primary goal, then your secondary, natural, or temporal goal.  
What do you believe the Lord for?



3. Established Prayer Times - I strongly urge you to try to pray not less than three times per day. First, pray in the morning; second, pray sometime in the afternoon; and finally, pray sometime in the evening. If eating three square meals daily is good for your health, praying and feeding your spirit three meals daily has to improve your spiritual health and wellness.
4. The Bible - The Bible is God's operation manual for human life. When fasting, one should read the Bible more now than at any other time. Therefore, if you read the Bible ten minutes a day when you are not fasting, you should read it not less than 30 minutes daily. Consider downloading the YouVersion Bible App for daily devotionals, Scriptures, and topical studies.
5. An Appropriate Posture - "And when you fast, do not look gloomy like the hypocrites, for they disfigure their faces that their fasting may be seen by others. Truly, I say to you, they have received their reward. But when you fast, anoint your head and wash your face, that your fasting may not be seen by others but by your Father who is in secret. And your Father who sees in secret will reward you." (Matthew 6:16-18 ESV)

### **TYPES OF FASTS INVOLVING FOOD**

**FULL FAST.** Drink only liquids – especially water. You may also take in clear broth and 100 percent fruit or vegetable juices on this type of fast to maintain your strength. You establish the number of days for your fast in your prayer time. Be sure to consult your doctor.

**SELECTIVE FAST.** This type of fast involves removing certain elements from your diet. One example of a selective fast is the Daniel Fast (Daniel 10), during which you remove meat, sweets, and bread from your diet and consume water and juice for fluids and fruits and vegetables for food.

**PARTIAL FAST.** This fast involves abstaining from eating any type of food in the morning and afternoon. This can correlate to specific times of the day, such as 6:00 am to 4:00 pm or from sunup to sundown.



## **BEFORE, DURING, AND BREAKING THE FAST**

### **Planning Your Fast**

"Then Joshua said to the people, "Consecrate yourselves, for tomorrow the Lord will do wonders among you." Joshua 3:5

**Pray**—Spend time reading the Bible before the fast. Ask the Holy Spirit for guidance in your prayers. Write down your faith goals and specific prayer requests for your family, friends, church, and nation.

**Commit**—Pray about the fast you will undertake and commit to it beforehand. Ask God for grace to help you follow through with your decisions.

**Act**—Start eating smaller portions a few days before the fast. Avoid food high in sugar and fat. Plan to limit physical and social activities for the week of the fast. Ask someone to be your prayer partner throughout the fast.

### **While Fasting**

"[Jesus] answered, 'It is written, 'Man shall not live by bread alone, but by every word that comes from the mouth of God.'" Matthew 4:4

**Focus**—Set aside time to work through the devotionals. Be ready to respond to God's Word and the leading of the Holy Spirit.

**Pray**—Join at least one prayer meeting in your local church. Intercede for your family, church, pastors, nation, campuses, and missions throughout the week.

**Replenish**—During mealtime, read the Bible and pray instead. Drink plenty of water and rest as much as you can. Be ready for temporary physical weakness and mental annoyances like impatience and irritability.

### **Breaking the Fast**

"And this is the confidence that we have toward him, that if we ask anything according to his will he hears us. And if we know that he hears us in whatever we ask, we know that we have the requests that we have asked of him." 1 John 5:14–15



**Eat**—Reintroduce solid food gradually. Your body will need time to adjust to a regular diet. Start with fruits, juices, and salad, then add more vegetables. Eat small portions throughout the day.

**Pray**—Do not stop praying! Trust God’s faithfulness and timing. Carry your newfound passion for God throughout the year. Be in faith for God to answer your prayers.

## **FREQUENTLY ASKED QUESTIONS**

Here are some of the most-asked questions about fasting from our friends and partners:

### **What if I have a medical condition?**

Consult your doctor before starting any fast. Decide together what is possible. If your health condition prohibits you from fasting food, try fasting something else and concentrate on prayer and Bible study.

### **Can children fast?**

The best way to show your children the power of fasting is to lead by example. If they want to participate in fasting or if you want to have a family fast, consider giving up desserts or soft drinks. In addition to giving up an item of food, you could also give up television as a family and spend that time reading and discussing Bible stories.

### **What is a “Daniel Fast”? (Resource and Further Details:**

<https://jamesriver.church/danielfast>)

Read Daniel 1:12 and Daniel 10:2-3. The Daniel Fast is based on the prophet Daniel’s fasting experiences as recorded in the Bible. The fast is a biblically based partial fast. According to Daniel 1, the results were: (v. 17) learning, skill, wisdom, spiritual understanding, favor, and better appearance! (v. 19) In Daniel 10, the fast resulted in answered prayer and spiritual insight. (vv. 11-12) One of the great things about the Daniel Fast is that you are not limited to any specific amount of food but rather to the kinds of food you can eat. There are three critical components to the Daniel Fast:

1. Only fruits, vegetables, nuts, legumes, whole grains.
2. Only water or natural fruit juice for a beverage
3. No sweeteners, breads, meat, eggs, or dairy products



### **What if I start and cannot finish the fast? Have I fasted for nothing?**

Seeking God through prayer and fasting is never a waste of time. When you make the effort, God takes notice. Just determine within your heart that you will make an even better effort next time. Alternatively, try finishing up with a partial fast.

### **I forgot and ate something that was not on my fast . . . do I need to start again?**

No, think of fasting as a marathon rather than a sprint. Do not give up! If you fall, get up and keep trying. Conquering “king stomach” is complex, but you will make it.

### **Do I continue to exercise while fasting?**

Moderate exercise is good. But it is best to always consult a doctor about fasting and exercise. If you are on a complete fast, you may not have the energy for a high level of exercise.

### **What if I have a manual labor job?**

If you have a job that requires you to expend much physical energy, you may want to consider a partial fast that allows you to receive enough nutrition to perform your job.

### **Can my spouse and I be intimate during our fast?**

Read I Corinthians 7:2-5, especially verse 5, which says do not deprive one another (of sexual relations) EXCEPT WITH CONSENT, for a time . . . that you may give yourselves to fasting and prayer. So, the answer is yes. Scripture allows this for fasting and prayer, BUT only with mutual consent. If you are not married, please continue exercising the discipline of abstinence.



## **DAILY CONFESSIONS: WHO/WHAT I AM IN CHRIST**

- I am reigning in life by Jesus Christ (Romans 5:17)
- I am not looking at the things that are seen, but at the things which are not seen (II Corinthians 4:18)
- I am walking by faith and not by sight (II Corinthians 5:7)
- I am casting down imaginations and every high thing that exalts itself against the knowledge of God (II Corinthians 10:5)
- I am the righteousness of God in Christ Jesus (II Corinthians 5:21 and Romans 6:14)
- I am rooted and grounded in love because Christ dwells within me (Ephesians 3:17)
- I am the workmanship of God, created in Christ Jesus for good works (Ephesians 2:10)
- I am a partaker of God's divine nature (II Peter 1:4)
- I am prosperous and in good health because my soul prospers (III John 2)
- The renewing of my mind is transforming me to prove the perfect will of God (Romans 12:2)
- I am healed by the stripes of Jesus Christ (I Peter 2:24)
- I am more than a conqueror through Jesus Christ (Romans 8:37)
- I am the salt of the earth, and the light of the world (Matthew 5:13a, 14a)
- I am complete in Christ (Colossians 2:10) • I am strong in the Lord and the power of His might (Ephesians 6:10)
- I am taking the shield of faith and quenching all the fiery darts of the enemy (Ephesians 6:16)
- I am praying for my desires and receiving them (Mark 11:24)
- I am like a tree planted by the rivers of water, and everything that I do prospers (Psalm 1:3)
- I am a temple of the Holy Ghost (I Corinthians 6:19)
- I am given exceeding great and precious promises, and by them I partake of the divine nature, having escaped the corruption that is in the world through lust (II Peter 1:4)
- The spirit of God leads me; therefore, I am a son of God (Romans 8:14)
- I am not walking after the flesh but after the Spirit (Romans 8:1)
- I am receiving all my needs met according to His riches in glory by Christ Jesus (Philippians 4:19)
- I am casting all my cares upon Him because I know He cares for me (I Peter 5:7)
- I am blessed with all spiritual blessings in Christ Jesus (Ephesians 1:3)
- I am blessed when I come in and blessed when I go out (Deuteronomy 28:6)



- I am an heir of God and a joint-heir with Jesus Christ (Romans 8:17)
- I am increasing and abounding in love (1 Thessalonians 3:12)
- I am being made perfect in every good work to do God's will (Hebrews 13:21)
- I am showing forth the praise of God (Psalms 51:15)