



# 21 Days of Prayer

## ***Fasting Guide***

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### ***Introduction***

We want our church to pray and fast, with not only thanksgiving, petitions, and supplication, but we want to hear the voice of God and His direction.

The campaign will start Sunday, January 16, and end on February 6.

We will have a congregational prayer during the campaign, every Wednesday from 7:00 pm through 8:00 pm. We invite you to participate.

The campaign will end with a time of Praise and Worship on February 6 in the evening.

**Please read the fasting guide below in preparation for the fast**

### ***Fasting Is Biblical***

It is a spiritual discipline where a person, small or large group, agrees to humble themselves and abstain from food and drink for a predetermined period to reach out to God in lament or supplication.

Some Hebrew texts use the word ("*anah*") for fast, which is often translated as "deny yourself." That may imply that an act of self-denial such as abstinence from an activity significant for the individual was also intended.

The Gospels refer to fasting as a regular practice, with specific references to John and his disciples and the Pharisees (Matt 9:14; Mark 2:18; Luke 5:33; 18:12). Jesus fasted for 40 days before his earthly ministry's official beginning, where he was tempted in the wilderness. The historical books of Luke and Acts depict fasting as a part of worship (Luke 2:37; Acts 14:23). The early church took upon voluntary fast for various reasons, such as calling for God's blessing on the church's mission. The church at Antioch engaged in fasting before sending out missionaries (Acts 13:2–3) and elders' appointments (Acts 14:23). Early documents such as the *Didache* encouraged fasting twice a week, and other ancient texts speak of fasting before baptism.

### ***Fasting Is Voluntary***

As an act of self-denial, it starts with a personal and intentional decision to present our "bodies [as] a living and holy gift given to God" (Romans 12:1b NIV). Church leaders may invite others to join in fasting with a specific goal in mind and for a specific time, but this is voluntary. When fast involves abstinence from food, certain factors can determine the degree to which we can fast or not. For example, age, physical limitations, illnesses, eating disorders, being under medication, etc. Pregnant or nursing mothers

are not encouraged to fast food or drink since it could negatively affect the child. Minors are discouraged from fasting.

### ***Recommended Steps when Fasting<sup>1</sup>***

#### **STEP 1: Set Your Objective**

- Why are you fasting?
  - This will enable you to focus your prayers more specifically and strategically.
  - As a commitment to follow the prayer directives for the campaign.
  - Determine any personal reasons you may have.

#### **STEP 2: Make your commitments**

- Before fasting, you must commit to the following:
  - How long will you fast - one meal during one day, a week, 21 days?
  - What meals will you be abstaining from during your time of fast?
    - Breakfast
    - Lunch
    - Dinner
    - Two meals?
    - Three meals?
    - Daniel fast?
      - Daniel Fast restricts what you can eat rather than when you eat. It's essentially a vegan diet without sugars, refined carbs, caffeine, or alcohol for 21 days.
      - See <https://www.allrecipes.com/article/what-is-the-daniel-fast/>
  - Beginners should start slowly, building up to longer fasts.
    - You may drink water only
    - Water and juices
    - What kinds of juices you will drink, and how often
  - What physical or social activities will you restrict?
  - How much time each day will you devote to prayer and study of God's Word?
    - During the fast, you should devote to prayer the time you would use for your meal(s).

### **STEP 3: Spiritual Preparation**

- Fasting and prayer begin humbling ourselves before God and acknowledging that we are sinners saved by grace. Therefore, we:
  - Repent and confess for any unconfessed sin that could hinder our prayers.
  - Confess every sin that the Holy Spirit calls to your remembrance and accept God's forgiveness (1 John 1:9).
  - Seek forgiveness from all we have offended and forgive all who have hurt us (Mark 11:25; Luke 11:4; 17:3,4).
  - Make restitution where possible and needed, as the Holy Spirit leads you.
- Submit our worldly nature to the will of God (Romans 12:1,2).
- Praise God for His love, peace, joy, righteousness, sovereignty, power, wisdom, faithfulness, grace, compassion, and His many other attributes. (Psalm 48:9,10; 103:1-8. 11-13).
- Begin your time of fasting and prayer with an expectant heart (Hebrews 11:6).

### **STEP 4: Physical Preparation**

- Fasting requires reasonable precautions. Consult your physician first, especially if you take prescription medication or have a chronic ailment. Some persons should never fast without professional supervision.
- Physical preparation makes the drastic change in your eating routine a little easier so that you can turn your full attention to prayer.
- Do not rush into your fast.
- Prepare your body. Eat smaller meals before starting a fast. Avoid high-fat and sugary foods.
- Eat raw fruit and vegetables for two days before starting a fast.
- ***While You Fast***
  - Devote to prayer the time you would use for your meal(s)
  - Avoid drugs, even natural herbal medicines and homeopathic remedies. Medication should be withdrawn only with your physician's supervision.
  - Limit your activity.
  - Exercise only moderately. Walk one to three miles each day if convenient and comfortable.
  - Rest as much as your schedule will permit.

- Prepare yourself for temporary mental discomforts, such as impatience, crankiness, and Anxiety
- Expect some physical discomforts, especially on the second day. You may have fleeting hunger pains, dizziness, or the "blahs."
- Withdrawal from caffeine and sugar may cause headaches.
- Physical annoyances may also include weakness, tiredness, or sleeplessness.
- The first two or three days are usually the hardest. As you continue to fast, you will likely experience a sense of well-being, both physically and spiritually.
- However, should you feel hunger pains, increase your liquid intake.
- Prepare for opposition, temptation, or discouragement press through. Satan tempted Jesus on the fast, and we should not expect any less.
- ***Important medical information***
  - Pregnant or nursing mothers should never fast all food and/or drink, as fasting could be very dangerous to their baby's development and health and their health.
  - People who have struggled with eating disorders in the past should undertake any fasting with wisdom and caution.
  - Fasting should not be used as a motive for weight loss.
  - If you have a diagnosed illness and/or are taking prescription medicine, fasting should only be done under a doctor or healthcare professional's direct supervision.
  - Some people have trouble fasting and become extremely hungry, dizzy, and nauseous because of undiagnosed low blood sugar levels. They should drink fruit and vegetable juices to help keep their blood sugar stable during short fasts.

#### **STEP 5: Set a Schedule**

- Set aside time for reflection alone with God
  - This can be done when you are supposed to eat your meal(s).
- Begin in praise and worship.
- Read and meditate on God's Word.
- Invite the Holy Spirit to work in you to will and to do His good pleasure according to Philippians 2:13.
- Spend time in intercessory prayer for the purpose stated for your fast or other special needs.
- You can take a short prayer walk.
- Avoid any distractions that may dampen your spiritual focus.

- Take time to listen to God's "still small voice." He can talk to you through the Spirit, song, a Scripture, or another person (like when Jethro advised Moses).

#### **STEP 6: Ending your Fast**

- Close with Praise
- Praise: Give God praise, thanksgiving, and submit your request to His sovereign will as expressed in His word.
- Thanksgiving: Giving thanks to God for who He is, what He has done, what He will do in our lives, and what He is doing.
- Reflect on Scriptures related to thanksgiving (I Thessalonians 5:18, Ephesians 5:20, Psalm 108:3, Psalm 50:23.)
- It can end with a doxology such as that of Ephesians 3:20, 21
  - *Now to him who by the power at work within us is able to accomplish abundantly far more than all we can ask or imagine, to him be glory in the church and in Christ Jesus to all generations, forever and ever. Amen.*

*Please note this resource is for informational purposes only. This document's information reflects only the limited opinions, experience, and suggestions of clergy and laity that have done this type of fasting before and is not meant to substitute the advice provided by your doctor or another healthcare professional. You should not use this information to diagnose or treat a health problem or disease or prescribe any medication. Additionally, this information is not intended to diagnose, treat, cure or prevent any disease. These tips have been found helpful and successful, but they are no guarantee that you will fast without experiencing any difficulties. You will need to do your own research, talk with health experts and experienced fasters, and continually ask the Lord for increased discernment and wisdom concerning fasting and healthy living.*

1 Condensed version of the 7 Basic Steps to Fasting and Prayer by Bill Bright of Campus Crusade for Christ