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FASTING & PRAYER

Introductory Guide

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FASTING & PRAYER

**With a humble heart dependent upon God,
there is power in fasting and praying!**

**Fasting and praying is a spiritual discipline where we
abstain from particular physical needs or physical
desires for a period of time, while being diligent and
intentional in seeking God.**

**Whatever the reason we fast and pray, it is always
meant to be a serious and dedicated time of sacrifice,
continual prayer and devotion.**

**When we say “NO” to our flesh for purposes of drawing
closer to God, He is faithful in saying “YES” and drawing
closer to us.**

**It is my prayer that as you take time to read, study and
implement this guide, your understanding of and
commitment to fasting and prayer result in your
relationship with God growing in ways beyond
imagination.**

Let's grow together!

Pastor Aaron



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Benefits of Fasting and Praying

**Deepens humility and understanding of
our dependence on God**

**Increases our hunger for God to work in
our lives**

Intensifies prayer concentration

Solidifies determination

Feeds your faith

**Sensitizes you to the Holy Spirit working
in your life**

**Ignites earnestness, zeal and greater
sincerity in your walk with God**



Reasons to Fast

When facing circumstances that seem impossible

Nehemiah 1:4 “When I heard these things, I sat down and wept. For some days I mourned and fasted and prayed before the God of heaven.”

Fresh revelation and direction from God

Ezra 8:21 “Then I proclaimed a fast there at the river of Ahava, that we might humble ourselves before our God to seek from Him a “safe journey for us, our little ones, and all our possessions.”

To receive God’s aid in battle and to defeat the enemy

2 Chronicles 20:3 “Jehoshaphat was afraid and [turned his attention to seek the Lord, and proclaimed a fast throughout all Judah.”

Esther 4:16 “Go, assemble all the Jews who are found in Susa, and fast for me; do not eat or drink for three days, night or day. I and my maidens also will fast in the same way. And thus, I will go in to the king, which is not according to the law; and if I perish, I perish.”

To prepare for ministering in the power and grace of God

Matthew 4:2 “And after He had fasted forty days and forty nights, He [a]then became hungry.”



Reasons to Fast

continued

To seek the mind of God

Acts 13:2 “While they were ministering to the Lord and fasting, the Holy Spirit said, “Set apart for Me Barnabas and Saul for the work to which I have called them.”

Acts 14:23 “When they had appointed elders for them in every church, having prayed with fasting, they commended them to the Lord in whom they had believed.”

To obtain a greater degree of God’s authority and power

Matthew 17:21 “But this kind does not go out except by prayer and fasting”

To humble yourself before God in reflection of His grace, mercy and protection

Psalms 35:13 “But as for me, when they were sick, my clothing was sackcloth;
I humbled my soul with fasting, And my prayer kept returning to my bosom”

To rededicate and commit yourself to God

Nehemiah 9:1 “Now on the twenty-fourth day of this month the sons of Israel assembled with fasting, in sackcloth and with dirt upon them.”



What Can I Fast From?

Before you begin a fast, make a personal plan for how you will approach it. The following guidelines and suggestions are provided to help you establish boundaries. Keep in mind that your fast may look different from someone else's. Others may choose to be more or less strict in their choices to ensure the fast is indeed a sacrifice for them. The goal is not to duplicate what others are doing. The focus of a fast is less about “what” is sacrificed and more about having a genuine desire to deny self as an act of worship and sacrifice before God.

****If this is your first fast, start slowly and with realistic goals. You can always adjust as you go.**

Types of Fasts:

- Complete Fast: abstain from all food and drink
- Daniel Fast: abstain from sugars, meats, oils, breads, caffeine, alcohol
- Technology Fast: TV, social media, gaming devices, tablets, etc.
- Partial Fast: fast from specific food items of your choosing (making sure they are indeed sacrifices for you), fast for a portion of the day (sunrise to sunset), fast on specific days (M-W-F or weekdays only)
- Sex: married couples mutually determine a specific period of time to abstain and seek God together

Being Intentional when Fasting

- **Plan for uninterrupted time to connect with God** in prayer. Consider preparing a special area in your home for your time of prayer and devotion.
- In addition to prayer, consider including time for worship (**praise music**)
- Read God's Word. Consider focusing on a particular book of the Bible, topic or Biblical figure.
- As you read/study the Bible, consider memorizing any Scripture(s) that stand out in your time with God
- Bring any personal needs to the Lord. Intercede for family, friends, your church, spiritual leaders, your community, city, etc. Create a prayer list/journal of those needs/requests.

Being Intentional When Fasting

continued

- **Make sure you allow times of stillness and silence** to LISTEN to God. Keep paper and pen handy to record what He reveals to you (journaling)
- **Confess and repent of any sins** as God brings them to your attention. Receive God's grace and forgiveness and make any commitments for repentance or restitution.
- **Read a book** that will feed you spiritually in an area, direction, or burden that you sense God may be leading you to
- **Expect the enemy to try to dishearten**, discourage or distract you. If you sense this happening, immediately go to God in prayer against it. Satan knows that this can be a powerful time between you and God, and will bring anything into your life to compromise your time and relationship with Him.
- **Spend time with others sharing** what God is doing in your life, share prayer burdens and answered prayers.



Prayer Time

Consider these 4 basic elements of prayer (ACTS):

1. **Adoration** (1 Chronicles 29:11) Recognizing and honoring God for Who He is.
2. **Confession** (1 John 1:9) Because sin separates us from God, we needed a Savior to redeem us. Because we know that Jesus Christ sacrificed Himself on the cross on our behalf, when we confess our sins before God and are truly repentant, we can know that those sins are fully forgiven.
3. **Thanksgiving** (Ephesians 5:20) Gratitude. Thankfulness to God for all that He has done for us. His greatest gift to us being the sacrifice of His Son as our Savior. There is no greater love than this!
4. **Supplication** (Matthew 7:7) Asking God for what we need (petition) with the understanding that nothing is too big or too small for Him. The Lord truly cares for us. We can ask with confidence, knowing that He will respond in His time and in accordance with His perfect will for us. Supplication also includes praying for the needs of others.

What About the Kids?

- Due to the specific nutritional needs of growing children and teens, it is not advisable for them to do a complete fast (abstaining from all food). Consider a brief partial fast, fast from sugar or a technology fast instead.
- Be sure to offer age-appropriate materials for young people to ensure understanding and keep their attention (consider children's and teen Bibles and devotional materials) *if you need guidance, email tlcyouth@thelifedfw.com and our youth team will be happy to help you find additional resources.
- Lead by example. Make sure they see you praying, reading your Bible and taking any cares, decisions, needs, etc. to God in prayer.
- Teach gratitude. Not only teaching them to thank us as parents/guardians, but also to recognize and thank God as the Source of everything-health, home, family, clothes, toys, parent's jobs, etc.
- The Prayer Hamburger graphic (based on the Lord's Prayer) is offered as a tool to help children grasp the parts of a "good prayer" in a way they can easily understand. Additionally, older children and teens can work on memorizing the Lord's Prayer (Matthew 6:9-13)



What About the Kids?

continued

- Create a habit of having a quick prayer time in the morning before kids leave for school/parents leave for work
- Create a prayer request list in a common area of your home where everyone can add to it as they need to, and commit to pray for those listed. Include a list of answered prayer too!
- If there is a set bedtime, maybe allow them to “stay up late” to pray, read a Bible story or a devotional, write in a prayer journal, etc.
- Establish family devotion times on a schedule that works for your household (purchase a book of devotions, find devotionals online or on Bible apps, or simply read a verse/passage/story and discuss as a family)
- Offer small rewards often (small treats, stickers, etc.), to younger children for Bible disciplines
- Lastly, be patient and have realistic, age-appropriate expectations and goals, especially with teens. New habits take time, so start small and build from there. Celebrate small successes, which will motivate everyone to keep going!



FASTING Q&A

Can I use seasonings, milk, grains, egg, vitamins, oils or butter? Fasting is a private discipline, and one that is not meant to be unattainable. Decide what is feasible for you to do and pursue that. Try not to get distracted with minute details. Determine what you will do, commit to it and put it in God's hands.

Do I continue to exercise while fasting? Moderate exercise is always good, but it's best to consult a doctor about fasting and exercise. During a complete fast you may lack the energy needed to maintain a high level of exercise and be a higher risk of dehydration. Please proceed cautiously.

What if I my job involves manual labor? If your job requires a lot of physical energy, consider a partial fast that insures you receive the necessary nutrition and hydration to safely sustain you.

What if I start but don't finish (or "break") my fast... have I fasted for nothing? Seeking connection to God through prayer and fasting is never wasted time. God looks to the heart and always takes note of our sincere effort. Determine in your heart that you will put forth better effort next time or try finishing with a partial fast. Just don't give up!

What if I have a medical condition? Consult your doctor before starting any fast and decide together what is possible for you. If your health or necessary medications prohibit you from fasting food, choose something that you consider a sacrifice and replace it with prayer and Bible study.



NOTES

