

## HOW and WHY TO FAST

Why do we fast and pray?

Jesus and the disciples practiced both fasting and prayer.

Fasting is a concrete way to say to God – *Lord, I need you more than I need physical bread. Feed me with your Word and your Spirit.*

Furthermore, it is a concrete and practical way to DEMONSTRATE that we don't only BELIEVE in Christ but we TRUST in Him.

We know that unless He works, we can't make it on our own.

Zechariah 4:6-7

*“This is the word of the LORD to Zerubbabel:  
'Not by might nor by power,  
but by my Spirit,' says the LORD Almighty.  
“What are you, mighty mountain? Before Zerubbabel  
you will become level ground.”*

God can turn the mountains into level ground as we trust in Him.

**How do we start?** There is work to do BEFORE we begin fasting and praying.

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

Why are you fasting?

Is it for spiritual renewal, for guidance, for healing?

Is it for the resolution of problems, for special grace to handle a difficult situation?

Ask the Holy Spirit to clarify His leading and objectives for your prayer fast.

This will enable you to pray more specifically and strategically.

Through fasting and prayer we humble ourselves before God  
so the Holy Spirit will stir our souls, awaken our churches,

and heal our land according to 2 Chronicles 7:14.

### **2: Make Your Commitment**

Pray about the kind of fast you should undertake.

Jesus implied that all of His followers should fast (Matthew 6:16-18; 9:14,15)

Before you fast, decide the following up front:

- How long you will fast - one meal, one day, a full week?
- The type of fast God wants you to undertake (such as water only, or water and juices; water and fruit? Often called a Daniel fast. Or fasting from a normal activity like TV)
- What other physical or social activities you will restrict
- How much time each day you will devote to prayer and God's Word

Making these commitments ahead of time will help you sustain your fast when physical temptations and life's pressures tempt you to abandon it.

### **3: Prepare Yourself Spiritually**

The very foundation of fasting and prayer is repentance.

Unconfessed sin will hinder your prayers.

Here are several things you can do to prepare your heart:

- Ask God to help you make a comprehensive list of your sins and even bad habits.
- Confess every sin that the Holy Spirit calls to your remembrance and accept God's forgiveness (1 John 1:9).
- Seek forgiveness from all whom you have offended, and forgive all who have hurt you (Mark 11:25; Luke 11:4; 17:3,4).
- Ask God to fill you with His Holy Spirit according to His command in Ephesians 5:18 and His promise in 1 John 5:14,15.
- Surrender your life fully to Jesus Christ as your Lord and Master; refuse to obey your worldly nature (Romans 12:1,2).
- Meditate on the attributes of God, His love, sovereignty, power, wisdom, faithfulness, grace, compassion, and others (Psalm 48:9,10; 103:1-8, 11-13).
- Begin your time of fasting and prayer with an expectant heart (Hebrews 11:6). God rewards those who seek Him.
- Do not underestimate spiritual opposition. Satan sometimes intensifies the natural battle between body and spirit (Galatians 5:16,17).

### **4: Prepare Yourself Physically**

Fasting requires reasonable precautions.

Consult your physician first, especially if you take prescription medication or have a chronic ailment.

Some people should never fast without professional supervision.

Physical preparation makes the drastic change easier:

- Do not rush into your fast.
- Prepare your body. Eat smaller meals before starting a fast.
- Avoid high-fat and sugary foods before you begin.
- Eat raw fruit and vegetables for two days before starting a fast.

If you are married, consult with your spouse. If both of you will fast, Then meal preparation becomes a lot easier.

Plan times when you can fast together rather than separately.

Don't plan to fast when work demands are excessive.

## WHILE YOU FAST

Your time of fasting and prayer has come. You are abstaining from all solid foods and have begun to seek the Lord. Here are some helpful suggestions to consider:

- Avoid drugs, even natural herbal drugs 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.

### **5: Put Yourself on a Schedule**

For maximum spiritual benefit, set aside ample time to be alone with the Lord. Listen for His leading. The more time you spend with Him, the more meaningful your fast will be.

#### *Morning*

- Begin your day in praise and worship.
- Read and meditate on God's Word, preferably on your knees.
- Invite the Holy Spirit to work in you to will and to do His good pleasure according to Philippians 2:13.

- Invite God to use you. Ask Him to show you how to influence your world, your family, your church, your community, your country, and beyond.
- Pray for His vision for your life and empowerment to do His will.

### *Noon*

- Return to prayer and God's Word.
- Take a short prayer walk.
- Spend time in intercessory prayer for your community's and nation's leaders, for the world's unreached millions, for your family or special needs.

### *Evening*

- Get alone for an unhurried time of "seeking His face."
- If others are fasting with you, meet together for prayer.
- Avoid television or any other distraction that may dampen your spiritual focus.

When possible, begin and end each day on your knees with your spouse for a brief time of praise and thanksgiving to God. Longer periods of time with our Lord in prayer and study of His Word are often better spent alone.

A dietary routine is vital as well. Dr. Julio C. Ruibal - a nutritionist, pastor, and specialist in fasting and prayer - suggests a daily schedule and list of juices you may find useful and satisfying. Modify this schedule and the drinks you take to suit your circumstances and tastes.

### *5 a.m. - 8 a.m.*

- Fruit juices, preferably freshly squeezed or blended and diluted in 50 percent distilled water if the fruit is acid. Apple, pear, grapefruit, papaya, watermelon, or other fruit juices are generally preferred. If you cannot do your own juicing, buy juices without sugar or additives.

### *10:30 a.m. - noon*

- Fresh vegetable juice made from lettuce, celery, and carrots in three equal parts.

### *2:30 p.m. - 4 p.m.*

- Herb tea with a drop of honey. Avoid black tea or any tea with caffeine.

### *6 p.m. - 8:30 p.m.*

- Broth made from boiling potatoes, celery, and carrots with no salt. After boiling about half an hour, pour the water into a container and drink it.

## Tips on Juice Fasting

- Drinking fruit juice will decrease your hunger pains and give you some natural sugar energy. The taste and lift will motivate and strengthen you to continue.
- The best juices are made from fresh watermelon, lemons, grapes, apples, cabbage, beets, carrots, celery, or leafy green vegetables. In cold weather, you may enjoy a warm vegetable broth.
- Mix acidic juices (orange and tomato) with water for your stomach's sake.
- Avoid caffeinated drinks. And avoid chewing gum or mints, even if your breath is bad. They stimulate digestive action in your stomach.

## BREAKING YOUR FAST

When your designated time for fasting is finished, you will begin to eat again. But how you break your fast is extremely important for your physical and spiritual well-being.

### 6: End Your Fast Gradually

Begin eating gradually. Do not eat solid foods immediately after your fast. Suddenly reintroducing solid food to your stomach and digestive tract will likely have negative, even dangerous, consequences.

Try several smaller meals or snacks each day. If you end your fast gradually, the beneficial physical and spiritual effects will result in continued good health.

Here are some suggestions to help you finish your fast properly:

- Break an extended water fast with fruit such as watermelon.
- While continuing to drink fruit or vegetable juices, add the following:
  - First day:* Add a raw salad.
  - Second day:* Add baked or boiled potato, no butter or seasoning.
  - Third day:* Add a steamed vegetable.
  - Thereafter:* Begin to reintroduce your normal diet.
- Gradually return to regular eating with several small snacks during the first few days. Start with a little soup and fresh fruit such as watermelon and cantaloupe. Advance to a few tablespoons of solid foods such as raw fruits and vegetables or a raw salad and baked potato.