

# Overview

According to Scripture, fasting is doing without food, or something else that brings pleasure, to humble ourselves before God and focus on Him. It is a time of willingly putting aside an earthly enjoyment to experience more of God. Prayer and fasting go hand in hand because as we free up space in our schedules, we can spend extra time with Jesus praying, meditating on His Word, resting in Him, and enjoying His presence.

## Reasons For Fasting

To seek God and His protection, deliverance, and healing in times of crisis, guidance, and direction (2 Samuel 12:15-20; 2 Chronicles 20:3-4; Ezra 8:21-23; Esther 4:15-17; Psalm 35:13; Daniel 6:18-23, 10:1-3; Job 2; 12-13; Judges 20:24-28)

To repent, be humble, and mourn over sin (1 Samuel 7:5-6; 2 Samuel 1:12; 1 Kings 21:27-29; Ezra 10:6-17; Nehemiah 1:1-4; Daniel 9:3-5; Jonah 3:5)

To worship and serve the Lord (Matthew 6:16-18; Luke 2:36-37; Acts 10:30)

To be filled with God's power for service (Acts 13:1-4; Acts 14:23)

## Types of Fasting

Water Fast: water only

Juice Fast: fruit and vegetable juices only

Daniel Fast: water, fruits, and vegetables only

Digital Fast: phone, social media, Netflix, news coverage, etc.

General Fast: anything that takes away your focus, or brings you pleasure

Partial Fast: fasting for one meal, part of a day, or from sunup to sundown

Multiday Fast: we recommend a 3 Day Fast or a 7 Day Fast

Extended Fast: we recommend a 21 Day Fast or 40 Day Fast

Group Fast: prayer and fasting with a group of believers for a specific purpose

## Fasting Guidelines

Reduce your normal food intake the week before your fast to prepare your body.

Drink a lot of water to stay hydrated.

Avoid caffeine, sugar, and sugar substitutes.

Limit your activity and allow yourself extra time to rest as you will have less energy.

Break your fast gradually with a small meal that is easy to digest.

Check with your doctor before attempting an extended fast from food.

\*Spiritual fasting is never for the purpose of weight loss. If you have ever struggled with an eating disorder, please use caution and wisdom. And if you are pregnant, a nursing mother, or someone with medical conditions you should choose a non-food fast.

## Fasting Basics

**Find Solitude:** try to find ways to be alone with the Lord.

**Meditate on Scripture:** God has chosen to give us the answer for every question and the fulfillment for every need through the Bible. Read more of God's Word as you fast and allow Him to speak to you through it.

**Spend Concentrated Time in Prayer:** spending time with Jesus not only talking to Him but being still before Him and listening to what He might be trying to teach you through His Word.

**Worship the Lord:** praise God through song, focusing on His names and attributes, and praying the Psalms.

**Take Time to Journal:** record the details of your fast to remember all that God is teaching you. Fasting is a spiritual discipline that adds amazing blessing and fullness to the believer's life. No matter where you are on your fasting journey, we encourage you to take the next step of obedience. If you have never fasted before, start slowly, and build up your ability to fast. If you are experienced in the practice of fasting, consider asking God to show you how He might desire for you to go deeper. In whatever season of life you find yourself, we are praying for you that God will use fasting to grow you closer to Him.



# DAY ONE

## humble yourself

Whoever exalts himself shall be humbled; and whoever humbles himself shall be exalted. -*Matthew 23:12*

There are many examples of humility in the Bible, but none paint a more vivid picture than that of Jesus washing His disciples' feet. Kneeling over the basin with a towel wrapped around his waist, Jesus demonstrated to his disciples and to us the proper posture to take if we are to make an eternal difference in this world. Our human nature leads us to exalt our own needs and desires above those of others. We can be filled with pride believing that it is our own strengths, talents, and intelligence that are fueling our Kingdom work. We are well-positioned to see Jesus work through us when we understand that we can do no good thing apart from Him. As we approach God with great humility, He chooses to entrust us with Kingdom assignments that He exalts and empowers us to accomplish.

Fasting is an act of humbling ourselves before God. As we turn to Him in prayer and fasting, we are admitting our neediness and desire to be filled with something greater than physical food. As we humble ourselves over the next three days, may God exalt us in our spirits to do the work of the church from Woodstock to the World!

### **Action Point**

Ask God today to search your heart and to reveal any pride or lack of humility in your life. We very often do not recognize our sin in this area. Spend some quiet time with the Lord and give Him the opportunity to bring to your mind anything that displeases Him. As you identify areas of pridefulness, write them down. When you feel ready, ask God to forgive you and ask for His help in humbling yourself. Find Scripture about humility and write them out. Set some safeguards for yourself to prevent pride from so easily popping up. For example, when I feel myself starting to take credit for something God has done, I will thank and praise Him. Do not rush through this exercise. Rather, give God the time to show you your areas of need. Remember, when you humble yourself, God promises to lift you up!

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*Jesus, thank you for your example of humility in the way that you lived and in the way that you died for my sins on the cross. Please help me today to humble myself in your sight that you might lift me up to serve, honor, and glorify you as you deserve. In your name I pray, amen.*



# DAY TWO

## forgive others

So, as those who have been chosen of God, holy and beloved, put on a heart of compassion, kindness, humility, gentleness, and patience; bearing with one another, and forgiving each other, whoever has a complaint against anyone, just as the Lord forgave you, so also should you. -Colossians 3:13

Part of our goal for this time of prayer and fasting is to remove all barriers to intimacy with God. Fasting affords us a mechanism to focus all our energy on Him. However, that focus is broken when we are holding something against someone else. There is no way that we can receive all that God has for us if a corner of our mind is saved for storing a grudge, no matter how small.

In this passage of Colossians, Paul is in the middle of an exhortation to Christians at Colossae to lead a holy life. He is pleading with them to not focus on earthly things, but on the things of God. An important part of our Christian life is how we walk with our fellow humans. Given that we are all sinners, we will all do things to others that are not Christ-like. Therefore, the corollary will likely be true: there is always going to be someone who has done something to upset us. Our charge from the Word of God is to be in a mode of active forgiveness. The word for "forgiving" is a present-tense, middle voice participle. It means that we are responsible for the action and the action is happening immediately, continuously, and permanently. Otherwise, our resentment will build and become a barrier to our relationship with God. Practice complete and permanent forgiveness, just like the forgiveness that we receive through Jesus.

Who do you need to forgive today? Pray and ask God to give you a forgiving spirit as you remember the way He has forgiven you. Who do you need to ask to forgive you? Ask God to fill you with the humility you need to apologize and make your relationship with this person right.

### **Action Point**

If God brought to your heart and mind someone you need to forgive or someone you need to ask for forgiveness, reach out to them before this day is over. Don't let another day pass without honoring God through forgiveness.

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*Father, please help me to put on a heart of compassion, kindness, humility, gentleness, and patience. Enable me to bear with others and forgive them when I have a complaint against them. Remind me often, Lord, that in the same way you have forgiven me, I need to forgive others. Create in me a self-awareness so that I can recognize my need to be forgiven and give me the strength, courage, and grace that I need to be able to follow through on my need to forgive others. Thank you for your grace to me. Help me to extend that to all of those I interact with. In the name of Jesus I pray, amen.*





# DAY THREE

## seek God

But seek first the kingdom of God and His righteousness, and all these things will be provided for you. -*Matthew 6:33*

Jesus spoke the words of Matthew 6:33 to a large crowd of people as part of the well-known Sermon on the Mount. Can you imagine being there in person and listening to the wisdom of Jesus on topics ranging from having a right relationship with humans to honoring God through our relationships with Him? Matthew 7:28 tells us that “the crowds were astonished at His teaching because He was teaching them like one who had authority, and not like their scribes.” He knew what He was talking about!

In Matthew 6:25, Jesus told the listening crowds on the mount the same thing He tells us today: “Do not worry about your life, what you will eat or what you will drink; or about your body, what you will wear. Isn’t life more than food and the body more than clothing?” Jesus knows that the antidote for worrying about these and other worldly concerns is to seek Him! When we seek first the kingdom of God and His righteousness, God takes care of our worries. That does not mean that He removes all the difficult circumstances and situations in our lives—it means that He cares for us in the midst of our trials.

- Most Christians would say that they desire to seek God first, but how do we practically do that?
- We are seeking God right now as a church by setting aside time to fast and pray together. Prayer with fasting says to God, “I hunger and thirst for you more than anything else.” *Psalms 63:1*
- We seek God as we read His Word and obey His commands. The Bible is alive, active, and the most reliable source for knowing God and His will. *Hebrews 4:12*
- Continuous communication with God through prayer is a way we can seek Him moment by moment. He is always with us! When we recognize His constant presence, each activity of the day becomes an opportunity to talk to Him. *1 Thessalonians 5:16-18*
- We seek to connect with the heart of God as we offer praise, worship, and thanksgiving. Sing praises to the Lord; pray psalms to Him; worship Him for who He is and all that He has done! *Psalms 95*

- Confession and repentance are our God-given ways to seek God’s righteousness daily in our own lives. Every day is a brand-new opportunity to be transformed into the likeness of Christ! *1 John 1:9*
- Seeking God’s Kingdom and His righteousness flows from a life surrendered to the Lordship of Jesus. We often place Jesus on the throne of our lives only to push Him off during times of worry, but He is always waiting for us to restore Him to His rightful place in our hearts and lives. *Philippians 2:9-11*

**Action Point**

What are your worries and concerns for our world, our church, your family, or yourself? Write them down on a piece of paper and then, one by one, release them to God in prayer. Tell Him that you choose to seek His Kingdom and His righteousness and that you trust Him to take care of everything you wrote down. Crumple your paper up and throw it away. When you feel tempted to worry, choose instead to seek God!

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*Father, I long to seek your kingdom and your righteousness. I choose to let go of my worry and seek you. Help me to grow in the discipline to seek you in the Bible and through prayer and fasting. Make me aware of your presence, and place in me a desire to talk to you all throughout the day. Put a song of praise and thanksgiving in my heart that I cannot keep inside. Don't allow me to walk in sin without calling me to confession and repentance. Jesus, I love you, and I want you to be the Lord and King over every part of my life. In my weakness, be my strength. In my worry, be my comfort and rest. Thank you that your promises are true! In the name of Jesus I pray, amen.*

DAY THREE

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