

## **A Beginner's Guide to Fasting — by a beginner**

### **My definition of fasting**

Fasting is a spiritual discipline of self-denial where for a limited time you relinquish something physical which gives you satisfaction, in order to find your satisfaction in God's presence and provision. It usually involves giving up food, but you can also fast by refraining from anything you indulge in for pleasure. For a time, you make feeding your soul a higher priority than feeding your body. It's on-the-job training for intimacy with God.

### **Fasting is:**

- an accompaniment to prayer. Fasting without prayer is dieting.
- following Jesus' example
- a method of turning our hearts toward God
- a way of helping us realise how much we satisfy ourselves and our desires.

### **Fasting is not:**

- proving to God how pious you are in order to persuade him to give you what you're asking for.
- to win spiritual "brownie points" in the eyes of others. In Matthew 6:16-18, Jesus says: *"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."*  
"Fasting is either a religious rite you feel compelled to do to be seen by men to feed your pride, or a spiritual discipline you desire to do to be seen by God who will feed your soul." [Author unknown]
- Notice Jesus said WHEN you fast – not IF you fast!!!
- a punishment
- putting your health at risk

### **You need to have a purpose for your fast.**

The main purpose of all fasting is to connect on a deeper level with God.

But there is usually a specific reason to fast. Being clear about your objective will enable you to pray more purposefully. The reasons for each week and each day are below.

### **What I've learnt from fasting**

#### **1. Fasting reminds me of God's presence**

During a fast, I've made it a practice that, every time I get a hunger niggles, or consciously resist indulging in snacks, or walk away from a mindless show on TV, I turn my mind to God, and acknowledge his presence in my day.

Here's how Bill Bright described being aware of God's presence: "The longer I fasted, the more I sensed the presence of the Lord. The Holy Spirit refreshed my soul and spirit, and I experienced the joy of the Lord as I seldom had before. Truths leaped at me from the pages of the bible. My faith soared as I humbled myself and communed with God, and rejoiced in His presence."

#### **2. Fasting is trusting God to provide**

When I deny myself food (or other things I rely on to satisfy me), I humbly admit my dependence on God alone to meet my needs.

### 3. Fasting makes me aware of my lack of self discipline

The experience of conscious self-denial helps me realise how easily and unconsciously I usually satisfy myself and my desires, and my good intentions to be less self-indulgent don't last very long. But I've found that when I abstain from a yummy morsel, or a time-wasting distraction for a set period of time, I'm actually training myself to do without it even when my time of fasting has finished.

### 4. Fasting reminds me who I am and what I am.

When I fast, I am reminded that I am a spiritual being living in a physical body, and true fulfilment will come from feasting on spiritual matters rather than the things that satisfy my fleshly housing.

### 5. Fasting leaves me mentally, spiritually and physically refreshed.

Anne Marie Winz describes this experience better than I could: "When I fast, God revives my heart, clears my head and gives me the courage to face living in a broken world."

### 6. Fasting always leads me to repentance

When I fast, I'm conscious of my selfish desires which distance me from God and his will for me. I repent of the areas of my life where I've been lured and distracted away from God, and thank him for his grace and forgiveness.

### 7. Fasting always gives me fresh insights

My faith in God is strengthened. My heightened awareness of his presence continues when the fast is over. I see answers to prayers. I am more sure of my part in heralding in the Kingdom.

### **A few closing thoughts:**

- Fasting isn't an easy discipline to embrace or to practice, but it is worth the effort!
- Begin your time of fasting and prayer with an expectant heart. One person reported "I've probably spent less than 5% of my total lifetime fasting, yet I've received over 80% of my spiritual clarity during or as a result of a fast."
- Don't underestimate spiritual opposition. Even when others don't know you're fasting, Satan is aware. Fasting sets spiritual forces in motion. So be prepared for Satan to intensify the battle between body and spirit.
- The first two or three days are usually the hardest. As you continue fasting, you are likely to experience a sense of well-being both physically and spiritually.
- A single fast is not a spiritual cure-all. A regular time of fasting has been greatly rewarding to many Christians.
- When people fast in community, the whole church can experience revival through the personal refreshing of faith of the individuals undertaking the fast.

We have mapped out the first five weeks. The themes for the remaining weeks will be added as we progress and realise what they need to be. Watch facebook each morning. We will provide more guidance and flesh out the ideas there. Our intentions for each day of this fast:

The presence of God		
	Waiting on God	April 21
	Seeking God	22
	Hunger for God	23
	"Tarrying" meetings in History	24
	Silent prayer	25
	Dwelling in the presence	26
	<b>SUNDAY</b>	27
Succession		
	Forget not the rock from which you were hewn - celebrating what God has already built here	28
	"New" in the Bible - and Managing a time of change	29
	"oversight" - our pastoral team	30
	Local leaders in the NT - our board	May 1
	Funding it all - the money	2
	Team - Loving one another. Mutual submission, Gifted discernment	3
	<b>SUNDAY</b>	4
The power of God		
	Standing up to The Ruler of this World	5
	Is 64:1 "Rend the heavens and come down"	6
	Being filled with the Holy Spirit	7
	Acts 4:30 Signs and wonders	8
	John 8:36 Freedom Deliverance	9
	1Cor 1:26-31 (We <i>can</i> do all things in Christ!!!!)	10
		11
Our community - Love		
	Discipling suburbs - not individuals	12
	When repentance shows up statistically (Crime, recidivism, DV, education. etc)	13
	Kids and youth	14
	The frail and ill	15
	The good hearted people doing Kingdom things - who don't acknowledge the King.	16
	Government	17
	<b>SUNDAY</b>	18
Holiness		
	The conviction of sin	19
	A vision of God	20
	Holy fear	21
	the life (and fruit) of the Spirit	22
	The knowledge of God	23
	1 P 3:21 - an appeal to God through the plea of a clean conscience.	24
	<b>SUNDAY</b>	25