



THE FAST

HOW TO GUIDE TO FASTING

OUR PRAYER FOR YOU...

WE HAVE A DESIRE THAT ASCENDE GLOBAL CHURCH WILL BE A PLACE KNOWN FOR CONSISTENT, FAITH FILLED PRAYER. KNOWING AND EXPECTING THAT GOD CAN DO MORE THAN WE ASK OR IMAGINE!

Our prayer for you during the next 21 days is that you will experience a deeper craving for the presence of the Lord and for the wonder of His leading in your life, and that you will know the fullness of the Holy Spirit and the favour of the God.

Our prayer is that you will realise you are not alone on this journey. You are joining with your immediate and extended church family in seeking God for significant personal, church, regional and nation wide breakthroughs.

Our prayer is that you will gain your own prayer-and-fasting testimony. And that God will overwhelm you with his goodness as you seek His presence, power and provision in every step of your journey.

*With Love
Pastors Dave & Kate*

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Matthew 6:16-18

When you give up eating, don't put on a sad face like hypocrites. They make their faces look sad to show people they are giving up eating. I tell you the truth, those hypocrites already have their full reward. So when you give up eating, comb your hair, wash your face. Then people will not know that you are giving up eating, but your Father, whom you cannot see, will see you. Your Father sees what is done in secret, and He will reward you.

Acts 13:2-3

While they were worshipping the Lord and fasting, the Holy Spirit said, "Set apart for me Barnabas and Saul for the work to which I have called them." So after they had fasted and prayed, they placed their hands on them and sent them off.

Joel 2:12

While they were worshipping the Lord and fasting, the Holy Spirit said, "Set apart for me Barnabas and Saul for the work to which I have called them." So after they had fasted and prayed, they placed their hands on them and sent them off.

Ezra 8:23

So we fasted and prayed to God about this, and He answered our prayer.

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WHAT IS FASTING?

Fasting is a spiritual discipline that is taught in the Bible.

Jesus expected His followers to fast and He said that God rewards fasting.

Fasting, according to the Bible, means to voluntarily reduce or eliminate your intake of food for a specific time and purpose.

WHY FAST?

There are many good reasons and even health benefits for fasting.

Our united 21 days of prayer and fasting is for three primary reasons:

Fasting gives you more time for prayer.

- We can use the time you would normally spend eating as time in prayer for what God wants to do in our lives as individuals and corporately as a church.
- In the Bible, fasting is always connected to prayer.

Fasting shows you mean business with God.

- Fasting will show the depth of your desire when praying for something.
- It shows you mean business with God - that you are serious enough about your prayer request to pay a personal price.
- God honours deep desire and praying in faith.

Fasting releases God's supernatural power.

- It is a tool we can use when there is opposition to God's will.
- Satan would like nothing better than to cause division, discouragement, defeat, depression and doubt among us.
- United prayer and fasting has always been used by God to deal a decisive blow to the enemy.

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THE PURPOSE OF FASTING

Often in the Bible, God's people fasted immediately before a major victory, miracle or answer to prayer.

It prepared them for a blessing.

Moses fasted before he received the Ten Commandments.

Exodus 34:28

Moses was there with the Lord forty days and forty nights without eating bread or drinking water. And he wrote on the tablets the words of the covenant - the Ten Commandments.

The Israelites fasted before a miraculous victory.

2 Chronicles 20:2-3

Some men came and told Jehoshaphat, 'A vast army is coming against you from Edom, from the other side of the sea. It is already in Hazazon Tamar.' Alarmed, Jehoshaphat resolved to inquire of the Lord, and he proclaimed a fast for all Judah.

Daniel fasted to receive guidance from God.

Daniel 9:3

So I turned to the Lord and pleaded with Him in prayer and petition, in fasting, and in sackcloth and ashes.

Nehemiah fasted before starting a major building project.

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.

Jesus fasted during His victory over temptation.

Luke 4:2

For forty wilderness days and nights He was tested by the devil. He ate nothing during those days, and when the time was up He was hungry.

The first Christians fasted when making decisions.

Acts 13:2-3

While they were worshipping the Lord and fasting, the Holy Spirit said, "Set apart for me and Barnabas and Saul for the work to which I have called them." So after they had fasted and prayed, they placed their hands on them and sent them off.

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TWO CAUTIONS

Remember, fasting is not 'earning' an answer to prayer.

God cannot be blackmailed by human effort

God wants to answer our prayers and He answers out of grace

Fasting simply prepares us for God's answer

Fast only if your health allows it at this time.

If you are only able to do a partial fast, do it in faith and God will honour your intentions.

If you have a history of eating disorders and 'extreme' dieting, we recommend that your fast is to eat three good meals a day and eliminate something else from your life, like television internet or social media.

MAKING YOUR SPIRITUAL EXPERIENCE THE BEST IT CAN BE

Fasting requires solid commitment.

Receiving God's best blessing from a fast requires solid commitment.

Arranging special times each day with God is absolutely crucial to attaining intimate communion with the Father.

You must devote yourself to seeking God's face, especially during those times in which you feel weak, vulnerable or irritable.

Reading His Word and pray during what are/would be meal times.

Meditate on Him when you wake in the night.

Sing praises to Him whenever you please.

Focus on your Heavenly Father and make every act one of praise and worship.

God will enable you to experience His command to "pray without ceasing" as you seek His presence.

Be aware that Satan will be on the prowl.

As you enter this time of heightened spiritual devotion, be aware that Satan will do everything he can to pull you away from your prayer and Bible reading.

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When you feel the enemy trying to discourage you, immediately go to God in prayer and ask Him to strengthen your resolve in the face of difficulties and temptations.

The enemy makes you a target because he knows that fasting is the most powerful of all Christian disciplines and that God may have something very special to show you as you wait upon Him and seek His face.

Satan does not want you to grow in your faith, and will do anything from making you hungry and grumpy, to bringing up trouble in your family or at work to stop you.

Make prayer a shield against such attacks.

True spiritual fasting focuses on God.

Do not become so caught up in praying for yourself and others that you forget about simply reverencing and praising God.

True spiritual fasting focuses on God.

Centre your total being on Him, your attitudes, your actions, your motives, desires and words.

This can only take place if God and His Holy Spirit are at the centre of our attention.

Confess your sins as the Holy Spirit brings them to your attention and continue to focus on God and God alone so that your prayers may be powerful and effective.

The results of a fast.

Renewed closeness with God and a greater sensitivity to spiritual things are usually the results of a fast.

Do not be disappointed if you do not have a mountain-top experience as some do.

Many people who have successfully completed extended fasts tell of feeling a nearness to God that they have never before known, but others who have honestly sought His face report no particular outward results at all.

For others, their fast was physically, emotionally and spiritually gruelling, but they knew they had been called by God to fast. They completed the fast unto Him as an act of worship; God honoured that commitment.

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What is your motive for fasting?

Your motive for fasting must be to glorify God.

It is not to have an emotional experience, and not to attain personal happiness.

A fast is not a diet or a 'hunger strike' to get God to do your will.

When your motives are right, God will honour your seeking heart and bless your time with Him in a very special way.

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HOW TO PREPARE:

This booklet is designed to guide you through our 21 days of prayer and fasting.

Firstly pick up one our 21 Day calendars.

This will give you the daily prayer focus and scriptures references.

21 Day by Day FASTING DEVOTIONAL

This will contain the Day by day Prayer Focus, Prayer Points and Scriptures.

This is available on our website and www.ascendeglobal.org.nz and will be posted daily throughout the 21 days.

This is a starting point, we don't have to follow a specific formula to talk with God, but practicing different ways to pray can help us find deeper purpose and connection to Him through prayer time.

The goal of using this guide is not to add pressure or overwhelm you. The goal is simply to get comfortable with talking to God. The important step is committing to regularly entering God's presence through prayer.

So have a place (this might be your favourite chair or on your way to work, have time (morning or evening, this is about a dedicated time with God), and HAVE A PLAN.

The heart of this guide is to help you find a new level of purpose, effectiveness, and enjoyment in your prayer life.

While prayer does take commitment and can require discipline to develop into a daily habit, we also want to remember that it's a "get to" not a "got to." It's a privilege to be able to come to God in prayer.

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WHAT IS PRAYER:

The most basic definition of prayer is "talking to God." Prayer is not mediation or passive reflection; it is direct address to God. It is the communication of the human soul with the Lord who created the soul.

Paul wrote, *"Do not be anxious about anything, but in every situation, by prayer and petition, with thanksgiving, present your requests to God. And the peace of God, which transcends all understanding, will guard your hearts and your minds in Christ Jesus."* Philippians 4:6-7
Worry about nothing, pray about everything.

Everything? Yes, God wants us to talk with Him about everything. How often should we pray? The biblical answer is "pray without ceasing: (1 Thes. 5:17). This does not mean, eyes closed or hands together.

Prayer can be audible or silent, private or public, formal or informal. You can pray any time of day, whilst doing chores, working, resting, during family time or alone time. We should keep a running conversation going with God all day long. Eyes open or closed, out loud or in our hearts, we can be creating a continual dialogue with God.

Some people asked Smith Wigglesworth, a great Apostle of Faith in the first half of the 20th century, about prayer. They said, "Smith Wigglesworth, you're a man of faith and miracles, you've raised people from the dead. You've cast out more demons than we've had hot dinners. Tell us, how long do you pray everyday?" He replied, "I don't ever pray any longer than twenty minutes." His questioners were very surprised by his answer, expecting the time to be so much longer. After pausing for effect, Smith Wigglesworth continued, "Yes, but I never go twenty minutes without praying."

Your prayer life is not measured in minutes. Prayer is a lifestyle. Prayer is a constant two-way communication with God. There is really no special formula for how to pray. We should just do it. We can pray under any and all circumstances. Prayer develops our relationship with God and demonstrates our trust and utter dependence upon Him.

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TYPES OF FASTS

There are many types of fasts, and the option you choose depends on your health, the length of your fast and your preference.

WATER FAST

A water fast means to abstain from all food and juices. You only drink water for the duration of the fast.

Only consider this if you have some experience with fasting and make yourself accountable to a recognised church leader.

PARTIAL FAST

A partial fast means to eliminate certain foods or specific meals. An example of this fast is in Daniel 10:2-3

"In those days, Daniel was mourning for three weeks. I ate no delicacies, no meat or wine entered my mouth, nor did I anoint myself at all, for the full three weeks."

There is a lot of flexibility with partial fasting, like:

- Eat only fruit and vegetables (as Daniel did).
- Eliminate all refined sugars and treat food.
- Eliminate coffee.
- Eat only one or two meals a day (no binging during your meal times - eat normal-sized portions.)
- Other kinds of fasts that do not involve a change of diet are also acceptable and recommended for younger people or those with health issues.
Example: eliminate television, internet, ipod, text messages and the like.

JUICE FAST

A juice fast means to drink only fruit or vegetable juices during meal times.

If you are beginning a juice fast, there are some juices you many wish to avoid and certain ones that are especially beneficial.

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You may find the following daily schedule helpful during your fast:

- 5am - 8am
Fruit juices, preferably freshly squeezed or blended, diluted in 50 percent distilled water if the fruit is acidic.
Orange, apple, pear, grape, peach or other fruits are good.
- 10:30am - 12pm
Green vegetable juice made from lettuce, celery and carrots in three-equal parts.
- 2:30pm - 4pm
Herb tea with a drop of honey. Make sure that it is not black tea or tea with a stimulant.
- 6pm - 8:30pm
Broth from boiled potatoes, celery and carrots (no salt).

Ensure your body gets the required nutrients.

The prospects of going without food for an extended period of time may be of concern to some.

There are ways to ensure that your body is getting the nutrients it needs so you can remain safe and healthy during your fast. For example: Some people continue to take a multivitamin supplement during an extended fast (be careful to follow the recommended instructions).

NON-FOOD FAST

This fast is a great option if you do not have much experience fasting food, have health issues that prevent you from fasting food, or if you wish to refocus certain areas of your life that are out of balance.

For example, you might choose to stop using social media or watching television for the duration of the fast and then carefully bring that element back into your life in healthy doses at the conclusion of the fast.

IF YOU HAVE ANY HEALTH CONDITIONS OR ARE CONCERNED ABOUT FOOD FASTING THEN YOU SHOULD CONSULT YOUR DOCTOR OR COMMIT TO A NON-FOOD FAST.

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HELPFUL HINTS

Do not drink milk because it is pure food.

Any product containing protein or fat, such as milk or soy-based drinks, should be avoided. These products will restart the digestion cycle and you will again feel hunger pangs.

For health reasons stay away from caffeinated beverages such as coffee, tea or cola. Because caffeine is a stimulant, it has a more powerful effect on your nervous system when you abstain from food. This works both against the physical and spiritual aspects of the fast.

If you are a family, especially with teenagers or children in the home, talk about what fast you will do to ensure safety. Be reasonable and work together as a family.

MAINTAINING OPTIMUM HEALTH

During a fast it is advisable to limit your physical activity as this will help maintain optimum health.

Exercise only moderately and rest as much as your schedule will permit - this especially applies to extended fasts.

Short naps are helpful.

No one on a water fast should exercise without the supervision of a fasting specialist.

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END YOUR FAST IN A HEALTHY WAY

Most experts agree that breaking a fast with vegetables, either steamed or raw, is best.

Your stomach is smaller now, so eat lightly.

Stop before you feel full.

Stay away from starches like pasta, potatoes, rice or bread.

Avoid meats, dairy products and any fats or oils. Introduce them slowly back into your diet and in small amounts.

It is wise to start with a little soup - something thin and nourishing such as vegetable broth made from onion, celery, potatoes and carrots as well as fresh fruits such as watermelon.

In relation to resuming any sort of exercise routine, the advice is the same. Start out slowly, allowing time for your body to re-adjust to its usual regime.

Acknowledgements:

* Pastor Rick Warren - *United Day of Fasting and Prayer*

* Dr Bill Bright - *Your Personal Guide to Fasting and Prayer*

AS WE BEGIN:

As we begin our 21 Days of Prayer and Fasting, there are some things that you might find helpful to do.

01: SET SOME GOALS

What would you like to see God do in these 21 days? Begin with clear personal goals, church goals, breakthrough goals. Be specific. Why are you fasting? Is there something or some specific you are praying for? Do you need direction, healing, restoration of your marriage or resolution of family issues. Are you facing difficulties? Pray and ask the Holy Spirit for guidance.

Write these requests in a journal or a notebook, or create a digital journal using your favourite note taking programme or app. Keeping a journal throughout your fast is a great way to track and remember all God does during your fast.

02: FEAST ON THE WORD OF GOD

Prayer and fasting is ultimately an expression of humility and dependence on God. It is about focusing specifically for the next 21 days on communicating with God and also replacing the daily intake of food, entertainment and human contact with focused times of prayer, spending time feeding on the Word of God and spiritual listening. Use this guide to help you, go on a Bible app and choose a reading plan, choose a book of the Bible and read it over the next 21 days. Read God's Word.

03: OPEN YOUR LIFE BEFORE GOD

One of the great benefits of focused time of prayer and fasting is a heightened awareness of God's presence and power in our lives. It is not that God has moved but that we have. Prayer and fasting has a great way of moving us toward a deeper spiritual dependency and away from wilful self-dependency. The greatest breakthrough will take place when you make time to examine your life and discover what areas most need breakthrough.

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04: EXPECT GOD TO MOVE

The Word of God says, "And without faith it is impossible to please God, for anyone who comes to Him must believe that He exists and that He rewards those who earnestly seek Him" (Hebrews 11:6). These next 21 days have the potential to impact you and your relationship with Jesus as well as the countless people and situations we will pray and fast over. If you have doubt, ask God to meet you in your doubts and lead you in overcoming them, just as the apostles prayed, "Increase our faith!" (Luke 17:5)