

Week of Prayer & *Fasting* Guide



If I were to stand on a street corner and ask, "What comes to mind when you hear the word *fast*?", most people would say something about the pace of life these days – it *is* fast, probably too fast. They would talk about the word "fast" as an adverb of speed and not a verb of abstinence. Curiously, there's a common root for both connotations of the word.

"Going fast" – traveling or working fast, or having a fast connection to the internet – *that* kind of fast comes from the same word as "fasting," in the sense of abstaining from food. Our English word "fast" comes from the Old English *fæsten*, which denoted "firm," such as "to hold fast" to some decision or principle. We also may talk about "a long, fast friend," meaning someone who has been a secure friend, someone who has been tight with you – a steadfast friend. This word "fast" came to be a verb, applied to the abstinence of food, because of one's "holding fast to a particular observance," which was a firm resolve. That's how the scriptures speak of fasting: more an affirmation of resolve rather than a renunciation of some desire.

Jesus talks about fasting in the Sermon on the Mount when He teaches about giving and praying. Jesus presumes we do all 3: pray, give, fast. In Matthew's gospel, we hear Jesus saying, "*When* you fast ..." Not "*If*," but "*When* you fast ..." He makes the assumption that people would hold to the practice of fasting, since fasting was a common practice in His day; they simply needed instruction on *how* to do it properly.

We're inviting you into a time of prayer and fasting, with various options to suit your personal circumstances. We are inviting you to hold fast to Jesus and seek His face because we are resolved that nothing matters more.

~ *Pastor James Paton*

“Announce a time of fasting; call the people together for a solemn meeting. Bring the leaders and all the people of the land into the Temple of the Lord your God, and cry out to Him there.”
(Joel 1:14 NLT)

WHAT IS FASTING?

Fasting in its simplest definition is understood as “voluntary abstinence from food or drink, especially as a religious duty.” As followers of Jesus, the purpose of all spiritual disciplines, including fasting, is to help us to become more like Jesus. We follow in His footsteps. Fasting helps us — personally and corporately — become aware of how God desires to work in us and through us.

We should never be motivated by the idea that our fasting will move God to do what we want; we cannot manipulate God. ***The purpose of our fasting is to draw us closer to God and to seek His will for our lives.***

“One of the greatest spiritual benefits of fasting is becoming more attentive to God — becoming more aware of our own inadequacies and His adequacy, our own contingencies and His self-sufficiency — and listening to what He wants us to be and do.” (E.L. Towns)

In the book of Esther, the Jews were on the verge of destruction because of Haman, one of the king’s advisors. Haman was filled with anger against a Jew named Mordecai because he didn’t bow or worship him. Haman looked for a way to destroy all of Mordecai’s people, the Jews, throughout the whole kingdom of Xerxes.

Mordecai knew he was in trouble so he sought help from Queen Esther, who was his niece. Now, for Queen Esther to approach the king for help without being summoned first was very dangerous — she would literally be risking her life. So Esther called a fast.

“Go, gather together all the Jews who are in Susa, and fast for me. Do not eat or drink for three days, night or day. I and my attendants will fast as you do. When this is done, I will go to the king, even though it is against the law. And if I perish, I perish.” (Esther 4:15-16 NIV)

Those 3 days of prayer and fasting changed history forever.

This is her moment. Esther goes to see the king, knowing she is quite possibly walking to her death. However, because Esther approached the king on behalf of her people, they would become a nation not of defeat but of favour and rescue.

When God's people fast with proper motive — seeking His will — and with a humble and repentant spirit, amazing things happen.

This is our moment. We're going to pray and fast as a church community. We're going to seek God's will for our lives, our church, our communities, our country, and our world.

DECIDING HOW LONG

Choose either a **1-, 3-, or 5-day fast** from food Monday, January 11-Friday, January 15. You may fast for as long as you like; however, use wisdom and pray for guidance. Ask the Holy Spirit to lead and guide you when making this decision.

Beginners are advised to start slowly. Keep yourself hydrated at all times. Drink plenty of water and juices. Remember to replace your time of eating with prayer and reflecting on the Word. We've provided 5 days of guided prayer and Scripture for everyone to lean into together as a community, regardless of how long you choose to fast.

WHAT TO EXPECT

When you fast your body detoxifies, eliminating toxins from your system. This can cause mild discomfort such as headaches and irritability during withdrawal from caffeine and sugars. And naturally, you'll have hunger pains. Limit your activity and exercise moderately; take time to rest.

You're following Jesus' example when you fast. Spend time listening to praise and worship. Pray as often as you can throughout the day. Get away from the normal distractions as much as possible and keep your heart and mind set on seeking God's will for us.

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

ENDING THE FAST

Don't overeat when the time comes to end your fast. Because your digestive system has most likely reduced enzyme production and affected the mucus lining in your stomach, overeating or ingesting certain foods too quickly may cause you to experience nausea, stomach aches, or diarrhea. Introducing regular foods slowly will help you break a fast safely, without disrupting your digestive system.

WORDS OF CAUTION

Please consult your family physician before attempting to fast if you have a physical condition that's affected by your food intake, have any type of chronic illness, and/or are taking any kind of prescription medications. If you're unsure whether you should participate for any reason, please consult your family physician.

Infants and small children should **not** fast. Older children who can understand fasting can participate by choosing a food they usually have each day and giving that up during the fast. The important thing is to explain to them that we are giving up something for the purpose of focusing on God.



Presenters

Dee Matheson.

Dee is married to Ray and is passionate about the Lord and journeying with others in all areas of life. Dee is a wonderful teacher and communicator. She loves to see others deepen their relationship with Jesus through spiritual disciplines. Dee enjoys reading, spending time in her garden and travelling to see her grandchildren.

Pam Jonasson.

Pam is married to Don and has a spirited dog named Brodie. Pam serves the Lord in FAC prayer ministry as well as several other ministries at FAC. In the spring of 2020, she picked up a book that had just been released written by Beth Moore called *Chasing Vines – Finding your way to an immensely fruitful life* -and so began a very challenging and fruitful time in the Word last summer. Pam shared with several friends the things that spoke to her heart from this book and this week's devotional is a direct off shoot of that time.



Daily Prayer Guide

This year's Week of Prayer & Fasting teaching videos and guidebook are available to watch and download on three platforms:

Youtube—<https://www.youtube.com/user/FACCalgary>

Facebook Live—<https://www.facebook.com/faccalgary/live>

FAC website—<https://www.faccalgary.com/prayerfast>

Videos on youtube and facebook live will be premiered each night at 7pm throughout January 11-15. Join the FAC community and watch online together.

Our FAC website will have videos & the guidebook available at any time so that each day you can set aside the time & space that works best for you.



A Word From Pam:

"I encourage you to spend intentional time with Jesus, this week.

Before you begin each day invite the Holy Spirit to speak to your heart, revealing what He desires for you to hear this week.

Take your time with the readings & reflections.

I like to write out Scripture as it helps me focus more clearly on the words. It is a form of meditating on Gods Word for me.

Read through the passage each day at least twice, on the third time, read it through voiced as a prayer.

Invite God to do a work in your life that is new in regard to Jesus being the true vine and the Father the gardener or vine-dresser.

This week is just a small excerpt from the book. I encourage you to get your hands on a copy if any of what I share speaks to your heart.

May you be blessed the way I, and others have been, by Beth's words and more importantly by the words of Jesus."



Day 1: Fasting

“One of the greatest spiritual benefits of fasting is becoming more attentive to God — becoming more aware of our own inadequacies and His adequacy, our own contingencies and His self-sufficiency — and listening to what He wants us to be and do.” (E.L. Towns)

1. Relax

Be still and quiet. Slow your mind and heart. Prepare your heart. Take a few deep breaths and wait on God.

2. Watch Day 1 video segment on Fasting

Before you begin watching, invite the Holy Spirit to speak to your heart, revealing what He desires for you to hear and do with regards to fasting.

4. Reflection

What is impacting you from the video?

What is God saying to you about fasting?

Are you able to fast this week? How will you do it?

How do you need to prepare yourself to fast this week?

5. Record what God did

What did God speak to you through these words on fasting?

6. Request

Conclude your time by talking to God about what He has shown you, asking Him to provide for you all that you will need in order to fast.



Day 2: The Vine

*Jesus is the true vine
John 15:1*

- 1. Relax**
Be still and quiet. Slow your mind and heart. Prepare your heart. Take a few deep breaths and wait on God.
- 2. Watch Day 2 video segment**
- 3. Read John 15:1-4**
Before you begin reading, invite the Holy Spirit to speak to your heart, revealing what He desires for you to hear in this passage. Take your time.
- 4. Reflect on the verses**
What is impacting you from these verses?
What is God saying to you through these verses?
Is there a truth here you need to apply to your life?
- 5. Record what God did**
What did God speak to you through these verses?
- 6. Request**
Conclude your time by talking to God about what He has shown you and making your requests.



Day 3: The Branch

*Abiding. The job of the branch is to abide.
A life that is lived in intimacy with Jesus is a life lived in love.
John 15:5*

1. Relax

Be still and quiet. Slow your mind and heart. Prepare your heart. Take a few deep breaths and wait on God.

2. Watch Day 3 video segment

3. Read John 15:5-8

Before you begin reading, invite the Holy Spirit to speak to your heart, revealing what He desires for you to hear in this passage. Take your time.

4. Reflect on the verses

What is impacting you from these verses?
What is God saying to you through these verses?
Is there a truth here you need to apply to your life?

5. Record what God did

What did God speak to you through these verses?

6. Request

Conclude your time by talking to God about what He has shown you and making your requests.



Day 4: Pruning

*The Gardener. God cuts back a fruitful vine
only to increase its fruitfulness*
John 15:1b-2

- 1. Relax**
Be still and quiet. Slow your mind and heart. Prepare your heart. Take a few deep breaths and wait on God.
- 2. Watch Day 4 video segment**
- 3. Read John 15:9-12**
Before you begin reading, invite the Holy Spirit to speak to your heart, revealing what He desires for you to hear in this passage. Take your time.
- 4. Reflect on the verses**
What is impacting you from these verses?
What is God saying to you through these verses?
Is there a truth here you need to apply to your life?
- 5. Record what God did**
What did God speak to you through these verses?
- 6. Request**
Conclude your time by talking to God about what He has shown you and making your requests.



Day 5: Roots

Take root downward. Bear fruit upward.
Ephesians 3:16-21

- 1. Relax**
Be still and quiet. Slow your mind and heart. Prepare your heart. Take a few deep breaths and wait on God.
- 2. Listen to/for God**
Lord, what do you want to say to me? Ask the Holy Spirit to open your eyes & heart to see God's truth.
- 3. Watch Day 5 video segment**
- 4. Read Ephesians 3:16-21**
Take time now to pray and invite the Holy Spirit to speak to your heart anything that you need to hear from Him in regard to this Scripture. Ask Him to reveal any aspect of Who God is that He may desire for you to see. And as we have done this past week, take your time. Read through this passage at least twice, and then the third time as a prayer.
- 5. Reflect on the verses**
Where are you rooted?
Are you rooted in Christ?
Are you rooted and grounded in love? In His love?
- 6. Record what God did**
What did God speak to you through these verses?



