



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

Day 5:

So often we go to God for what He can do for us, or rather, what we *want* him to do for us. What if we flip that and choose to go to God with the only intent of being with him. What if our only agenda was to just sit and be in his presence? Let's choose a pattern of life where we just sit and linger a while with God, out of a desire to simply be with him.

***"Seek (look to) the Lord and his strength;
seek his face always." 1 Chronicles 16:11 (NIV)***

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. Read the verse

Read the verse above through a few times. Read quietly to yourself, then read it out loud.

4. Reflect on the verse

- What is impacting you from this verse?
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What did God speak to you through this verse?

6. Request

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

*"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.

Day 4:

We are created to have a relationship with God simply because He loves us. God meets you where you are and is waiting to pour out His love on you. In the busyness of life, don’t forget the simple truth that God loves you. God’s love is unconditional and does not discriminate. Take time today to reflect on the ways God has shown you love and pray for those who have yet to receive God’s love.

“I have loved you, my people, with an everlasting love. With unfailing love I have drawn you to myself. Jeremiah 31:3 (NLT)

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Day 3:

We live in a broken world. And because of that we have to walk through broken circumstances in our lives. Sometimes those circumstances are the result of our own choices and sometimes they are the result of the choices of others. Regardless of which it is the end result is the same in that those circumstances keep us from God. Nothing we feel or think or do can keep us from how much God loves us and wants to be with us.

***“Can anything ever separate us from Christ’s love? ... I am convinced that nothing can ever separate us from God’s love.
Romans 8:35-39 (NLT)***

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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 13 -Friday, January 17. 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.

Day 2:

God is good. He is a good God. Do we really believe that? When we can live in the truth that God is good we come to see Him as the One who loves us, who knows what is best for us, who is able to guide us along the best pathway for our lives. When we truly believe that God is good we can trust him in every moment, no matter what is going on in our lives.

"For the Lord is good, his steadfast love endures forever, and his faithfulness to all generations." Psalm 100:5 (NRSV)

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Day 1:

As we anticipate God to move and to reveal Himself, we need to ask ourselves: am I serious about seeking after God? Am I willing to get serious? Do I want God to do things for me or do I want to actually know God more? There's a difference between knowing *of* someone and actually *knowing* someone. You get to know someone by spending time with them and listening to what they have to say. The same is true when you seek after God. As you intentionally seek after God and anticipate Him to reveal Himself to you, you will find Him.

***"When you search for me, you will find me; if you seek me with all your heart."* Jeremiah 29:13 (NRSV)**

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Daily Prayer Guide

Have you ever spent time with someone where at the end of that time you had a smile on your face, maybe even feeling warm and fuzzy on the inside at having spent time with that person? You walked away with a feeling of contentment and joy because there was something about being with them that was just good. Having spent time with them was good for your heart and soul because it was just a delight to be with them. It kinda leaves you longing for more.

Imagine if our relationship with Jesus was like that? Imagine if we created time within our frantic schedule to just sit with Jesus and enjoy his company. Not a "when I have time I'll get to it" but an intentional, carving out time to sit and be with him. We were created to be in a relationship with God. A relationship that is deep and meaningful, full of pure joy and delight.

This week, let's be still and acknowledge who God is. Let's expect God to show up in our lives and anticipate what he has for us. And let's be obedient to what he shows us and calls us to.

May we choose to slow down, to focus our time and attention on the One who created us and who *longs* to be with us just because he loves us.