

## GUIDELINES FOR FASTING

**Fasting is ceasing from something we already do for a particular time in order to focus on Jesus and demonstrate our hunger and thirst for Him.**

Fasting is praying with *intensity* for a specific period of time - to pray *intently* about a specific need. Most of the time it is fasting from food or certain types of food or drink, but it is not limited to food. Some people cannot fast from food due to health reasons or because certain medications must be taken with food. You should always check with your doctor before fasting for any length of time.

Alternatives to fasting from food can be ceasing from various forms of media (TV, social media, phone, computer, etc.), from sleep, even from talking or noise. It should be a sacrifice and is intended to make you uncomfortable to drive you toward God. Spend time in focused prayer during the times when you would normally eat or do whatever you are fasting from. Fasting is not just going without something. It is focusing on Jesus during that time. Read God's Word and allow it to guide you as you pray during your fast. God's Word is your daily bread, so your fasting is really feasting! As you *fast* from food or whatever you refrain from, you *feast* on God. ***"As the deer longs for streams of water, so I long for you, O God. I thirst for God, the living God. When can I go and stand before him?" Psalm 42:1-2***

**The important thing to remember is that you do not fast to impress God or get closer to God.** You already have all you need in Jesus and since He lives within you, He cannot get any closer to you! While fasting, you are becoming more aware of His presence, learning more about Him and discovering what you already have in Him. Fasting has been a powerful and deeply meaningful discipline for believers throughout the centuries.

- 1. Ask God about the type** (fasting from food, certain foods, sleep, media, etc.) **and duration of your fast.** (Examples: one meal a week, one meal a day, 24 hours – ex. from breakfast one day to breakfast the next, all food for 2, 3, 7 or more days, fasting from certain foods like red meat, breads, dairy, caffeine, sodas, etc., Esther fast – 3 days; Daniel fast – water and vegetables only for 10 days; Begin/ end your fast with the Lord's Supper – piece of bread or cracker and some juice)
- 2. Ease into your fast and come back out of it by eating lighter meals.** In other words, don't eat a large meal before or after your fast to try and compensate for the lost calories.
- 3. Make sure that you drink plenty of water – lots of water.** Your body needs it while you fast because you will expel toxins in your body and the water will flush them out. You may experience bad breath so be prepared to use breath mints. You may get tired, have less energy, be more irritable or get headaches. Allow these symptoms to drive you closer to God. Spiritually, fasting may reveal sin in your life as the Holy Spirit brings these to your attention. Repent and receive God's cleansing and forgiveness.
- 4. It may be helpful to drink fruit and/or vegetable juices, preferably unsweetened.** This provides your body with some necessary calories, energy, vitamins and minerals. It will help curb your hunger pains so you can function and maintain focusing on prayer, especially during a longer fast. Avoid caffeine and chewing gum, since these can actually increase your hunger.
- 5. Use a prayer guide to pray for specific areas of need.** We have provided a prayer guide for you to use during this 40-Day prayer emphasis.
- 6. Find a Scripture passage or a book of the Bible you will read and meditate on during your fast.** Suggested passages: Deuteronomy 6 – 8, Isaiah 58, Daniel 9:4-19, Nehemiah 9, Matthew 4:1-11, 6:16-18, any of the Psalms, Read through all 4 gospels, Read a whole book like Lamentations, Esther, Acts, Romans or Philippians.
- 7. Write down in a journal what God says to you through Bible reading and prayer.** Write down your prayers and/or your prayer requests and when they are answered. You may also want to send prayer notes (or e-mails or texts) to those you are praying for.
- 8. Pray with others and ask someone to hold you accountable during your fast.** Fasting is difficult and you will be opposed by the flesh (your body will protest!), the world (our culture is so conditioned to eating and indulging the flesh) and the devil (Fasting and prayer bring God's power against the darkness – see Mark 9:28-29). You will need someone else to encourage you, pray for you and pray with you while you fast. Don't try to do it alone!
- 9. Consider giving a contribution to our local food bank or another hunger ministry.** One of the aspects of fasting is giving you an experience of hunger that most people in the world experience daily. Giving to help the poor is more important to God than our religious rituals and fasting (see Isaiah 58).
- 10. Plan to make fasting a regular discipline in your walk with God.** It should become a meaningful part of your Christian life going forward and not just a one-time event.