

## **Fasting Guide & Tips**

### **What does the Bible teach about fasting?**

Biblical fasting involves abstaining from eating for spiritual purposes. You can fast food, a food group, a specific meal, social media, TV, even a hobby that takes a lot of your time.

The Bible is clear that there is power in our prayers when they are coupled with fasting. Throughout history, God's people united in prayer and fasting to seek God's favour, deliverance, direction, or provision:

#### **Biblical Examples of Fasting:**

Moses fasted before he received the Ten Commandments (Exodus 34:28).

God's people fasted when they were under attack from their enemies (2 Chronicles 20:3).

David fasted in mourning and repentance (2 Samuel 12:16).

Ezra led the nation in prayer and fasting for protection and success in building the temple (Ezra 8:21).

God's people fasted when Esther went before the king to win their deliverance (Esther 4:16).

Daniel fasted and prayed for God's mercy on the nation (Daniel 9:3).

Nehemiah fasted before beginning the rebuilding of the walls of Jerusalem (Nehemiah 1:4).

Jesus fasted during his victory over temptation (Matthew 4:2).

The early church fasted to receive direction in their decisions (Acts 13:2-3).

The apostle Paul fasted when appointing leaders for the church (Acts 14:23).

#### **MATTHEW 6:16-18 (NIV)**

"When you fast, do not look somber as the hypocrites do, for they disfigure their faces to show men they are fasting. I tell you the truth, they have received their reward in full. But when you fast, put oil on your head and

wash your face, so that it will not be obvious to men that you are fasting, but only to your Father, who is unseen; and your Father, who sees what is done in secret, will reward you"

**Notice, Jesus doesn't say if you fast. He says when you fast.**

A biblical fast means to reduce or eliminate something for a specific period of time for the purpose of seeking God. Our fast is 21 days. It's important to use the time you would have spent on the thing you are eliminating to be in the Word and talk with the Lord, worship, read the Bible, listen.

**Fasting can teach moderation or self-control, not only in relation to food, but in other areas as well.**

It teaches contentment. (I Timothy 6:6)

Fasting expresses and deepens our hunger for God. Fasting reminds us that we are sustained "by every word that proceeds from the mouth of God:" (Matt. 4:4).

Food does not sustain us; God sustains us. In Christ, "All things hold together" (Colossians 1:17).

Fasting should always center on God. It must be about Him.

**Step 1:** Clarify the Purpose of Your Fast. In our case it's a church wide initiative.

Ask the Holy Spirit to clarify His leading and objectives for your prayer fast. We've provided a prayer guide for you. Fasting is God-led and God-initiated. That means that He fuels a desire to fast and pray. He loves it when we fast.

**Step 2:** Specify the Kind of Fast You Will Do.

Pray about the kind of fast you should undertake. Certain meals, a food group, tv, social media, activities that take a lot of your time. How much time each day you will devote to prayer and God's Word? Making these commitments ahead of time will help you sustain your fast when physical temptations and life's pressures tempt you to abandon it.

**Step 3:** Prepare Your Heart, Mind, and Body for Fasting

Come to God and ask Him to speak to you, show you your heart, cleanse your mind and soul. The very foundation of fasting and prayer is repentance.

**Prepare your heart and mind:** Remember that God is your Father and He loves you and is for you.

Confess every sin that the Holy Spirit calls to your remembrance and accept God's forgiveness.

- Begin your time of fasting and prayer with an expectant heart. (Hebrews 11:6)
- Do not underestimate spiritual opposition. Satan sometimes intensifies the natural battle between body and spirit. (Galatians 5:16,17)
- Fasting is a discipline that can take a very long time to understand well.
- Get your bible out, a note pad, perhaps play worship music, turn off the TV, get alone, shut the door and put your phone in another room.

**Fasting requires reasonable precautions.** Consult your physician first if you are doing a food fast, especially if you take prescription medication or have a chronic ailment. Some persons should never fast without professional supervision.

**Take a step of faith.** Fasting involves our faith. Choosing your fasting plan is a personal decision. We are all at different places in our walk with God and our spirituality should never be a cause for comparison or competition. There is nothing more "inherently spiritual" about one type of fast as opposed to another. Your personal fast should present a level of challenge to it, but know your body, know your options, and most importantly, seek God in prayer about this and follow what the Holy Spirit leads you to do. **It's also important to not let what you eat or do not eat or what you choose to eliminate becomes the focus of your fast.** This is a time to disconnect enough with your regular patterns and habits in order to connect more closely to God.

We encourage you to come to Bethel Prays every week at 6:30 pm on Wednesdays. The church auditorium is also open at noon every Wednesday.