

PRAYER and FASTING

————— H O R I Z O N —————
C H U R C H

When You said
Seeh my face, my
heart said to You,
Your face, LORD,
I will seeh.

Psalm 27:8

Spiritual Growth through Prayer and Fasting

Biblical fasting always has to do with eliminating distractions for a spiritual purpose. It helps us hit the reset button of our soul and refocus our attention amidst the busyness of life. In Scripture, we see that fasting was a common spiritual practice and while the reason for fasting varied, the focus was clearly on the heart of the person(s) fasting. *The primary goal was always to draw nearer to God.*

In August 2022, we are entering a season of focused prayer and fasting as a church family. We invite you to consider being part of the journey. There are many ways you can participate but the type and duration of your fast is not as important as the strength of your focus on God as you fast.

The most common type of 'fast' is reducing your food intake. Sometimes the word "fast" is also used to describe abstaining from pleasures besides food, like TV, internet or other things. You might know people who have gone on a "social media fast" or a "screen fast" for spiritual

reasons. It is a way of eliminating for a time things that can compete your relationship with God. *Whatever you choose to fast, the idea is you redirect that time and energy towards prayer.*

Fasting doesn't make your prayers more powerful or force God's attention to your prayers. Rather fasting does something in us that changes how we approach God in prayer. We are reminded of our total need of God beyond anything else, our focus shifts, our attitudes and priorities are challenged and our lives are realigned with HIS purpose and priorities. Your confidence and faith in God will be strengthened.

To help you prepare for this season of prayer and fasting, we have provided some helpful resources on selecting and planning your fast as well as Scriptures and resources about fasting. In addition, please feel free to reach out to our Horizon Team for further information.

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Types of Fast

There are a number of types of 'fasts' that you could consider:

Complete Fast

In this type of fast, you drink only liquids, typically water and light juices or soups. Most healthy adults can engage in a complete food fast for 3 days with relative ease.

However, any complete fast for more than 3 days should be preceded by a consultation with your doctor to ensure it is safe to commence. Please note that complete fasting is **NOT** recommended for children under the age of 18, or for people who are pregnant, elderly or have any underlying medical or psychological condition.

Selective Fast

This type of fast involves removing certain elements from your diet. One example is the Daniel Fast, during which

you consume water and juice, plus fruits and vegetables for food. You fast from all other foods including meat, sweets, bread and cereals.

Partial Fast

This fast involves abstaining from eating any type of food for a portion of the day. This can either correlate to specific times of the day, (eg. 6:00 am to 3:00 pm or from sun-up to sundown) or perhaps forgoing a specific meal each day.

Soul Fast

This fast is a great option if you are new to 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.

“I humbled my
soul with fasting”

Psalm 69:10

How to Plan your Fast

Health Check

If you intend to engage in a full food fast of more than 3 days or have any underlying medical condition please consult with your doctor BEFORE commencing.

Record Your Plan

What type of fast will you engage in? How long will you fast for? Your personal fast should present a level of challenge, but it is very important to know your body, your options, and most importantly make wise decisions regarding your level of participation. If you have never fasted from food before then start with an achievable goal for you. It is best to write out a brief plan that covers the areas below;

Type and duration of fast

Record your chosen type of fast and the length of the fast.

Manage your routine

Include in your plan how you intend to manage key times in your daily routine that could be challenging (eg. meal times, work commitments or social events).

Prepare for extended 'God Time'

Plan how will you reinvest your time in prayer and God's Word. How will this

fit in your day? How can you prepare? Worship music, a good journal and planning a private space or daily prayer walk are great options.

Reduce temptation

Consider how you might reduce temptation to break your fast. Eg. Food fast -packing away certain grocery supplies that won't be needed; Fasting TV or social media - switch these facilities off for the duration.

Organize supplies

What supplies might you need to prepare in preparation for your fast? Plenty of water is a must. Do you need to stock up on juices or soups?

Accountability & Support

Consider who you might share your plan to fast with. Chat with someone who has completed a fast before to know what challenges you may encounter along the way and how to plan for them. Similarly, it is great to have someone to 'check-in' with as you fast to encourage you. While fasting can be a very private matter, it is also a great help to fast along with other members of your Life group so you can be a support to each other and share testimonies of how your extended times with God are going.

During your Fast

Gradual Start & Gradual finish

If fasting food, plan to gradually reduce your food intake as you begin and then gradually increase it again as you conclude. Be aware that a return to solid foods needs to be done slowly. Cravings and short-lived headaches can be common in the beginning especially for those reducing caffeine intake.

Hydrate

Keeping well hydrated is essential throughout a food fast. Prepare by reducing your intake of caffeinated drinks and increasing your water intake.

Keep God the Focus

Make your fast more about spending extra time with God in Prayer and reading the Bible, rather than about forgoing food or other activity. If you struggle or break your fast prematurely, don't beat yourself up. Refocus and restart as long as it is medically safe for you to do so.

Record your Journey

Keep a journal handy to record your insights and experiences of God during your Fast. There may be highs and lows, track the journey and encourage yourself to persevere. Share your testimony of what God did in you after the fast has concluded.

Apply Wisdom

If you become unwell during the fast or experience symptoms of medical concern, please pause your fast and seek professional medical guidance before continuing.

SCRIPTURES ABOUT FASTING

Matthew 6:16-18 (Jesus speaking about fasting)

Esther 4:16 (Esther & the Jews)

Joel 2:12-13 (Joel & nation of Judah)

Isaiah 58:3-7 (Isaiah & nation of Judah)

Daniel 10:3 (Daniel)

Ezra 8:21-23 (Ezra & the Jews returning from Babylon)

Jonah 3 (Jonah & Nineveh)

Psalms 69:10 (David)

Matthew 4 (Jesus tested in the Wilderness)

Exodus 34:27-29 (Moses)

Luke 2:36-38 (Anna)

Luke 18:9-14 (The Parable of the Pharisee & the Tax Collector)

Acts 13:2, 14:23 (Paul, Barnabas & the early church)

HELPFUL RESOURCES

Your Personal Guide to Prayer and Fasting by Dr Bill Bright

<https://21days.churchofthehighlands.com/guide>

7 Basic Steps to effective Fasting and Prayer by Dr Bill Bright

<https://www.cru.org/us/en/train-and-grow/spiritual-growth/fasting/7-steps-to-fasting.html>

