



Prayer & Fasting

AN NCCB RESOURCE

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NAME

**WHEN YOU PRACTICE SOME
APPETITE-DENYING DISCIPLINE
TO BETTER CONCENTRATE
ON GOD, DON'T MAKE A
PRODUCTION OUT OF IT ...
IF YOU 'GO INTO TRAINING'
INWARDLY, ACT NORMAL
OUTWARDLY ... GOD DOESN'T
REQUIRE ATTENTION-GETTING
DEVICES. HE WON'T OVERLOOK
WHAT YOU ARE DOING; HE'LL
REWARD YOU WELL.”**

MATTHEW 6:16-18



CONTENTS

- 1** Some Context To Fasting.....1
- 2** Scriptures On Fasting8
- 3** Faith Is The Key Ingredient11
- 4** Learning From Others.....12
- 5** Things To Pray Into.....14
- 6** Preparing To Fast.....16

1 Some Context To Fasting

Fasting is an ancient spiritual discipline that finds its roots in Biblical history. It has been a blessing to the church for thousands of years. However, it seems to be a forgotten practice in the lives of many believers today.

This booklet aims to bring a level of understanding as to why we believe in fasting at NCCB and hopefully provide believers a launchpad into a fulfilling lifestyle of prayer and fasting.

SEEK FIRST THE KINGDOM

A very well know Scripture in church circles is the passage found in Matt 6:33, **“But seek first the kingdom of God and his righteousness, and all these things will be added to you.” ***

The interesting thing about this text is that it occurs during Jesus’ famous Sermon on the Mount and follows a pattern that Jesus gave to live as children of God. That pattern includes three specific Christian practices; Giving, Praying, and Fasting.

- **“When you give ...”** (vv. 6:2, 3)
- **“When you pray ...”** (vv. 6:5, 6, 7)
- **“When you fast ...”** (vv. 6:16, 17)

In each of these instructions, Jesus describes the correct practices of giving, praying, and fasting as something that focuses on the relationship between the person and God, instead of the person and others.

GIVING AND PRAYING ARE PROBABLY TWO PRACTICES THAT CHRISTIANS ARE MORE FAMILIAR WITH AS PART OF THEIR LIFESTYLES. HOWEVER, WE ARE ALSO INSTRUCTED TO INCORPORATE FASTING AS A GODLY PRACTICE IN OUR CHRISTIAN WALK.

WALK AS JESUS WALKED

Many Christians today are caught measuring themselves against other Christians, but our example of what it means to live a normal Christian life is found in Jesus. Jesus is not a religious figurehead; instead, He was the first in a new lineage of redeemed humanity. John makes the statement, **“This is how we know we are in him: Whoever claims to live in him must walk as Jesus did”** (1 John 2:5-6, NIV).

Walking as Jesus walked is an exciting invitation to live a supernatural life! We can learn much from the way that Jesus walked and the things that He did. One of these practices was fasting and praying.

In fact, the first occasion that we see the Bible mention Jesus fasting is when the Holy Spirit led Jesus into the desert where He did not eat for 40 days (Luke 4:1-14). At the end of the passage in verse 14, we read that Jesus returned to Galilee after the fast, having overcome the temptation of the enemy and operating **“in the power of the Holy Spirit.”**

Nowhere in the New Testament are we commanded to fast. Instead, we are invited to follow the lifestyle that Jesus modelled. Did it include fasting? Absolutely! We must realise that in order to obtain Kingdom outcomes, we need to move beyond a reliance on our own power – fasting is one of the ways of us doing this!

* All references to Scripture are from the English Standard Version Bible, unless otherwise noted.



THE FLESH VERSUS THE SPIRIT

One of the running themes in the Apostle Paul's writings is that of the flesh versus the spirit. Paul notes that the **mind set on the flesh is death**, but the **mind set on the spirit is life** (Rom. 8:6). So how do we set our minds on the spirit? A believer's spirit is that part of us that is in contact with the Spirit of God. It represents the deepest desires that God placed within us when He created us, desires to be in an unbroken relationship with Him. Our flesh, however, represents the disordered desires we find ourselves battling because of the fallen world that we live in. Paul himself says, **"For I do not do the good I want, but the evil I do not want is what I keep on doing"** (Rom. 7:19).

Why is it that even Paul struggled with the flesh? James K. Smith puts it well when he says, **"The culture that we live in is a formative space ... covertly shaping our loves and longings."**¹

OUR LIVES ARE ORIENTATED BY OUR LONGINGS. IF WE ARE NOT INTENTIONAL ABOUT THE DIRECTION OUR DESIRES TAKE (I.E., ACTIVELY DIRECTING OUR DESIRES TOWARDS THE THINGS OF GOD), WE WILL VERY QUICKLY FIND OURSELVES DOING THINGS WE DON'T WANT TO. PAUL TELLS US TO CRUCIFY (ROM. 8:13), NOT GRATIFY THE FLESH. BECAUSE OUR PHYSICAL BODY AND OUR FLESH ARE TIED TOGETHER, ONE OF THE ROLES THAT FASTING PLAYS IS TO STARVE OUR FLESH AND FEED OUR SPIRIT.

Through prayer and fasting, we intentionally orientate ourselves towards the things of God. Fasting is a means of aiming our love towards God and opening our lives up to be led by the Holy Spirit.

1. **Smith, James K.** "You Are What You Love: The Spiritual Power of Habit (Audible Audio Edition)." (BrazosPress: Audible Audiobooks, 2016).

IT WILL BE TOUGH, BUT YOU'RE NOT ALONE

One thing that you must understand is that when you fast, it will be tough! You are essentially picking a fight with your flesh (not your body – your body is your ally, not your enemy). John Mark Comer warns that, **“Fasting will reveal to us just how much power and authority our flesh still has in our lives”** ² ... and that is absolutely the truth. But here's the good news, the person of the Holy Spirit is present to help us!

When Jesus tells His disciples that He is going to leave them, He says the Father will give the disciples “another Helper” (John 14:16). The word used for Helper in the Greek is *paráklētos* and has been translated Counselor, Comforter, Advocate, Encourager, Intercessor, or Helper. However, the Aramaic word is *paraqleta*, which is taken from two root words: (1) *praq*, “to end, finish, or to save,” and (2) *lyta*, which means “the curse.” Brian Simmons (who wrote *The Passion Bible Translation*) notes:

WHAT A BEAUTIFUL WORD PICTURE, THE HOLY SPIRIT COMES TO END THE WORK OF THE CURSE (OF SIN) IN OUR LIVES AND TO SAVE US FROM ITS EVERY EFFECT! PARAQLETA MEANS “A REDEEMER WHO ENDS THE CURSE.” ³

Fasting isn't about growing your willpower. It is about feeding on the Holy Spirit and gaining access to a power beyond you. This is what Jesus called abiding (John 15, Abiding in the Vine).

In his book, *Holy Fire: A Balanced, Biblical Look at the Holy Spirit's Work in Our Lives*, R.T. Kendall describes twenty-one things to know about the Holy Spirit. Why not meditate on some of these aspects of the person of the Holy Spirit during your times of fasting?

- ① He is God (2 Cor. 3:17)
- ② He is a person (John 14:16; 16:18)
- ③ He is eternal (Heb. 9:14)
- ④ He is the Spirit of Truth. (John 14:17; 16:13)
- ⑤ He was involved in creation (Gen. 1:2)
- ⑥ He, using people, wrote the Bible (2 Tim. 3:16; 2 Pet. 1:21)
- ⑦ He is our teacher (John 14:26)
- ⑧ He can be grieved (Eph. 4:30)
- ⑨ He can be quenched (1 Thes. 5:19)
- ⑩ He is the one who convicts (John 16:8)
- ⑪ He is our guide (John 16:13; 1 Cor 2:14)
- ⑫ He speaks only what the Father gives Him to say (John 16:13)
- ⑬ He will predict the future (John 16:13)
- ⑭ He will glorify Jesus Christ (John 16:14)
- ⑮ He can be blasphemed (Matt. 12:31)
- ⑯ He is our reminder (John 14:26)
- ⑰ He gives power (Acts 1:8; 1 Cor 4:20)
- ⑱ He manifests through various spiritual gifts (1 Cor. 12:7-10)
- ⑲ He directs people to Jesus and makes Him real (John 15:6)
- ⑳ He manifests through various fruit (Gal. 5:22-23)
- ㉑ He gives renewed power (Acts 4:31; Eph. 5:18) ⁴

2. **Comer, John Mark.** “Fasting: Part 1 – To Starve the Flesh and Feed the Spirit.” (Practicing The Way, Video, 55:43, Accessed June 15, 2021), <https://vimeo.com/251217639>.

3. **Olive Tree Bible Software.** “The Passion Translation New Testament (2nd Edition) - TPT by Brian Simmons.” (Accessed June 15, 2021), <https://www.olivetree.com/store/product.php?productid=60789>.

4. **Kendall, R. T.** “Holy Fire: A Balanced, Biblical Look at the Holy Spirit's Work in Our Lives.” (CharismaHouse, Kindle, 2014), 607–931.



2 Scriptures On Fasting

Fasting is mentioned over 50 times in the Bible and is common in both the Old Testament and New Testament.

For the purpose of this resource, we will look at two passages of Scripture, from which much of what we need to know about fasting can be gathered.

1 LUKE 4:1-14 - JESUS' EXAMPLE

We have already mentioned the first account of Jesus fasting in the Bible, now let's take a bit of a closer look! When considering the grand narrative of the Bible, **it is important to know that our Heavenly Father's plan is one of restoration – where there was once brokenness, He is restoring creation to beauty!** In the Luke 4 text, we find one such restoration taking place. When the original sin was committed in Eden, Adam and Eve succumbed to the temptation of the devil. However, we now see Jesus redeeming the first Adam by overcoming the devil's temptation.

Interestingly, the original sin involved food – to eat or not to eat, that was the temptation that faced Adam and Eve! With Jesus, the first recorded temptation again had to do with food. The devil insisted that Jesus **“command this stone to become bread”** (Luke 4:3). However, Jesus quotes the Scripture, “Man shall not live by bread alone” (v. 4) ... the original text in Deut. 8:4 continues, “but man lives by every word that comes from the mouth of the Lord.”

What is the lesson that we can learn from this? Perhaps our fleshly needs, of which food is arguably primary, need to be emptied so that our hearts can be filled with God's Word.

Too often, we associate being hungry with being weak. Verse 2 tells us that at the end of Jesus' fast, He was hungry. However, His spiritual strength ensured that He was able to resist the devil and overcome the temptations thrown His way. **One could argue that this was not Jesus' natural strength; He was strengthened through the power of the Holy Spirit.** Verse 14 supports this idea, noting that Jesus returned from His wilderness experience “in the power of the Spirit.”

The same source of power by which Jesus was able to ensure victory over the devil is available to us through the Holy Spirit. It is Jesus' spirit-filled humanity that provides the example for us to follow. **In fasting, our insufficiency to sustain ourselves is highlighted. Yet, with it comes the invitation to open our lives to the power of the Holy Spirit.**

2 ISAIAH 58 - TRUE FASTING

THE BACKGROUND TO THIS TEXT IS THAT GOD, THROUGH ISAIAH, CALLS THE ISRAELITES TO ACCOUNT FOR HOW THEY WERE FASTING. THEY WERE MAKING FASTING A PURELY LEGALISTIC EXERCISE.

Theologian, Michael Bird, describes legalism as **“the constant temptation to reduce the gospel to a performance treadmill of works to win divine favour, turning God into an insufferable taskmaster.”**⁵ Israel were caught in this trap of going through the motions, expecting favour from God. However, their other behaviours demonstrated that their hearts were actually far from God.

So, God tells them first what true fasting is all about, and then what the great benefits of fasting are. Both of these are great encouragements to us today. Fasting according to God is seen in self-sacrifice to the Kingdom and doing what will see the Kingdom advance.

- **Fasting cannot be done while the rest of our lives are 'aimed' at seeking our own pleasures (v. 3).**
- **Fasting cannot be done while mistreating others (v. 3)**
- **Fasting cannot be done while there is strife or contention (v. 4)**
- **Fasting should cause one to bow their head in humility (v. 5)**
- **Fasting is a time of searching the heart and repenting of sin (v. 5)**

5. Bird, Michael. “Evangelical Theology: A Biblical and Systematic Introduction. 2nd edition..” (Zondervan Academic. Kindle, 2020), 25.

Isaiah contrasts the type of fast that the Lord chooses - what it looks like:

- **Loosing the chains of injustice and wickedness (v. 6)**
- **Setting people free (v. 6)**
- **Breaking every yoke (v. 6)**
- **Helping those who are hungry to be fed (v. 7)**
- **Helping the poor to find shelter (v. 7)**
- **Providing clothing for those who are naked (v. 7)**

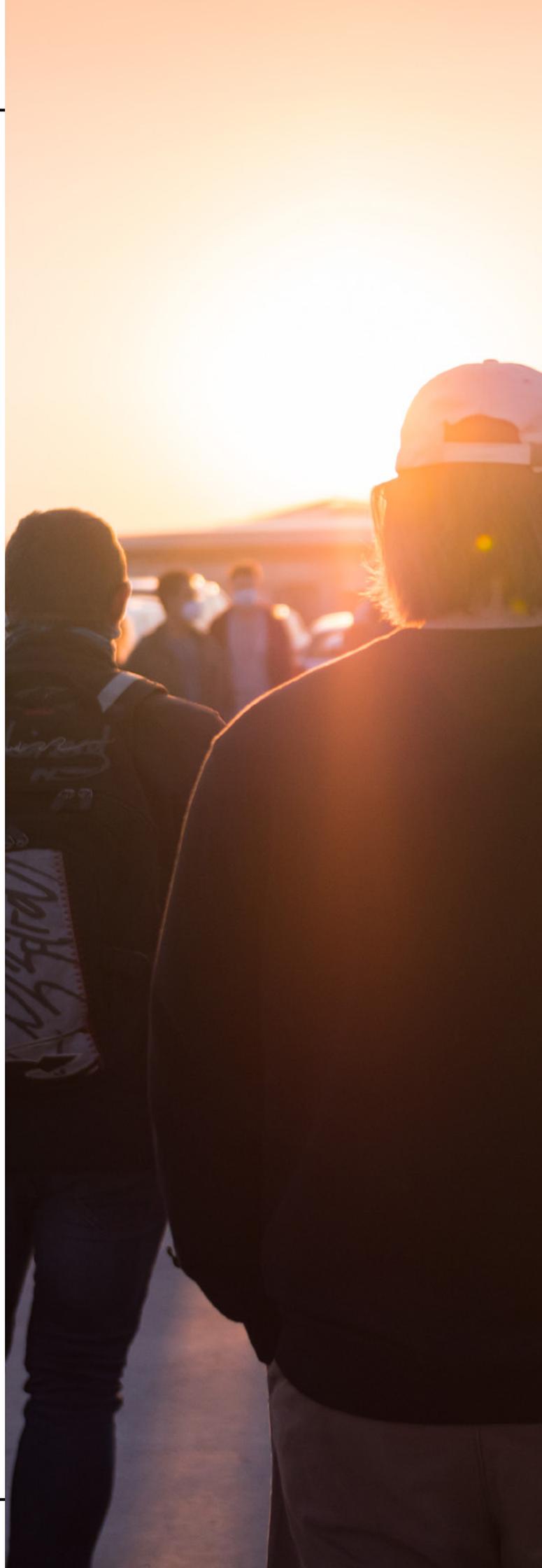
At the heart of true fasting, you will notice a sacrifice of our own desires for the Kingdom desires of God.

Isaiah then describes what genuine fasting accomplishes in our lives:

- **New revelation (your light breaking forth) (v. 8)**
- **Healing and wholeness will come, and there will be righteousness (v. 8).**
- **The presence of God will be with you (v. 8, 9)**
- **The Lord will hear your cries and answer your prayers (v. 9)**
- **Provision to satisfy the needs of the oppressed (v. 10)**
- **Guidance and contentment (satisfy your needs) (v. 11)**
- **Strengthening and refreshing (v. 11)**
- **Restoration (v. 12)**

Through Isaiah, God reaffirms His readiness to bless His people when they fast in a manner that shows their hearts are aligned to what God desires.

THIS TEXT CONTRASTS FASTING FROM A LEGALISTIC PERSPECTIVE TO USING IT AS A MEANS OF 'AIMING OUR LOVE' TOWARDS GOD.



OTHER SCRIPTURES ON FASTING

Fasting for breakthrough from oppression: In Mark 9, Jesus' disciples were unable to cast out an evil spirit. Jesus explained, **"This kind can come out by nothing but prayer and fasting"** (Mark 9:29, NKJV). Through prayer and fasting, we can break free from addictions, habits, and demonic oppression.

Fasting for God's presence and revival: While the Philistines were preparing to attack Israel, Samuel instructed the people to fast and seek God to return His presence to the nation. It was a fast for national revival. **"If my people, who are called by my name, will humble themselves and pray and seek my face and turn from their wicked ways, then will I hear from heaven and will forgive their sin and will heal their land"** (2 Chron. 7:14, NIV). We can return to a place of intimacy with God's presence in our personal lives and corporately through fasting.

Fasting for protection from trouble: In Ezra 8:21, Ezra calls a fast when the Israelites returning to Jerusalem faced an uncertain journey. Ezra had also been given silver and gold from King Artaxerxes to take back with him (Ezra 7:14-17) and feared the danger of thieves along the way. Fasting instills a confidence in God as our protector.

**FASTING WAS A MEANS OF PEOPLE
'EMPTYING THEMSELVES' TO BE FILLED
BY GOD. THE INVITATION IS THERE FOR
ALL OF US TO DO THE SAME.**

Fasting to break negative feelings and habits: When Jezebel sent word that she wanted Elijah killed, he became incredibly distraught and even suicidal (1 Kings 19:4). An angel came to Elijah and instructed him to journey to Mount Horeb. The Bible tells us that Elijah fasted 40 days and nights until he reached the "mountain of God" (v. 8). It was here that Elijah again encountered the presence of God and heard the "gentle whispers" of God (v. 12, NIV).

Fasting can restore hope, overcome fear, impart courage, and provide direction as our hearts hear the "gentle whispers" of God for our lives.

Fasting for major life decisions: After Paul's encounter with Jesus on the road to Damascus, "for three days he was without sight, and neither ate nor drank" (Acts 9:9). Can you imagine the inner conflict Paul must have been experiencing? After all, it was because of his devout faith that he had been persecuting the Christians. Paul didn't know what to do, but we see him fasting for divine direction. God sent a disciple, Ananias (v. 17), to Paul with guidance. Paul was going the wrong way with his life, but God intervened and provided him with a new direction.

These are only a few of the numerous examples in Scripture of the role that fasting played in the lives of believers.

**WHAT ROLE CAN FASTING
PLAY IN YOUR LIFE?**

**"UNBELIEF PREVENTS US FROM COMING
TO THE FATHER THROUGH THE SON AND
PUSHES US AWAY FROM THE KINGDOM
OF GOD, THRUSTING US OUT INTO THE
KINGDOM OF THIS WORLD. NOTHING
IS WORSE THAN UNBELIEF, BECAUSE
IT KEEPS US FROM WHAT GOD HAS IN
MIND FOR US."**

A.W. TOZER

3 Faith Is The Key Ingredient

We've already mentioned that fasting is not a practice to strengthen our willpower. Instead, fasting is an invitation to surrender ourselves fully to God. **It is in our weakness that His power is made perfect** (1 Cor. 12:9). To trust God's power to be at work in our times of weakness takes faith. Genuine faith is the starting point of your spiritual growth. It represents your confidence in the absolute promises and unchanging character of God.

One of the strategies of the enemy is to get us to turn our eyes off of Jesus as the **"author and perfecter of our faith"** (Heb. 12:2, NIV) and rather to try in our strength. However, no amount of trying in our own strength will ever dislodge the strongholds of the enemy in our lives. John Eckhardt notes, **"Unbelief hinders us from dealing with strongholds. It takes faith to dislodge the enemy. Fasting helps you overcome unbelief and build strong faith."** ⁶

Fasting is an act of sacrifice that moves us into the realm of faith. Meditating on the Word of God and praying prayers of faith during fasting is a great way to be strengthened in our time of need. We have included a selection of prayers that release faith, adapted from Eckhardt's book, *Fasting for Breakthrough and Deliverance*.

WHY NOT ASK THE HOLY SPIRIT TO SPEAK TO YOU THROUGH SOME OF THESE PRAYERS AND THEN PRAY THEM OUT LOUD AS DECLARATIONS OF FAITH OVER YOUR LIFE AND THE CIRCUMSTANCES YOU FACE.

PRAYERS OF FAITH

- **I declare that by faith, I will walk through my trials on dry ground, and the opposition surrounding me will be drowned (Heb. 11:29)**
- **I am established and anointed by God (2 Cor. 1:21)**
- **I cry out to you as your disciples prayed, "Increase my faith!" (Luke 17:5)**
- **I choose to walk by faith and not by sight (2 Cor. 5:7)**
- **I see through the eyes of faith the promise of things far off. I believe in their reality. I embrace them, knowing that I am a stranger and pilgrim on this earth (Heb. 11:13)**
- **I will stand firm and not waiver; I will come boldly before God, asking in faith (James 1:6)**
- **I am a covenant child of God because I have faith in Jesus Christ (Gal. 3:26)**
- **As I believe in you, Lord Jesus, let it be according to my faith (Matt. 9:29)**
- **Like Stephen, use me as a vessel to reveal your greatness because I am full of faith (Acts 6:8)**
- **My faith does not rest in the wisdom of men but in the power of God (1 Cor. 2:5)**
- **I will not allow my heart to lose hope or enthusiasm. Instead, through faith and patience, I will imitate those who inherit the promises of God (Heb. 6:12)**
- **As I pray the prayer of faith, I will trust the Healer to see the sick saved and raised up (James 5:15)**
- **I take up the shield of faith that will quench the fiery darts of the evil one (Eph. 6:16) ⁷**

6. Eckhardt, John. "Fasting for Breakthrough and Deliverance." (Lake Mary, FL: Charisma House, 2016), 1.

7. p 39-41.



4 Learning From Others

Fasting is far more than just not eating food. It is also about becoming aware of what diet we are feeding our soul.

Two great messages about fasting that will help you gain a greater understanding of this topic are those by Alex Seeley and John Mark Comer. Some of the insights related to each have been listed below. However, we would like to encourage you to take some time with your family or friends to watch these messages together ... it will be food for your soul!

For the purpose of this resource, we will look at two passages of Scripture, from which much of what we need to know about fasting can be gathered.

ALEX SEELEY: THE BELONGING CO.

https://www.youtube.com/watch?time_continue=3&v=z8TgDgSRNN0&feature=emb_logo

In her message, Alex Seeley references Isaiah 58:1-12 and shares what true fasting looks like.

There are several helpful truths in her message; here are some:

- **Fasting without prayer is just starvation.**
- **Have a list of what you're bringing before the Lord.**
- **True fasting will lead to humility before God and ministry towards others.**
- **Our fast should not be selffocused.**
- **Fasting should bring a humility before God, as we trust God to serve others.**
- **Fasting is done to heighten our awareness of the Father's heart.**
- **As we deny our flesh, we get filled up with God. ⁸**

8. Seeley, Alex. "Prayer And Fasting." (The Belonging Co TV, Video, 44:25 , August 27, 2020), https://www.youtube.com/watch?time_continue=3&v=z8TgDgSRNN0&feature=emb_logo

JOHN MARK COMER: BRIDGETOWN

<https://vimeo.com/251217639>.

John Mark Comer revisits the ancient practice of fasting as evidenced in the life of Jesus and the early church.

Some of the insights he shares are:

- **Our lifestyle is one where we think appetite and hunger are one and the same.**
- **Food has a power over us that we don't like to admit (it's called the pleasure principle).**
- **Fasting is not eating food in order to feed on the Holy Spirit.**
- **Failure to discipline your body, and with it your flesh, will have a ripple effect across your whole person.**
- **Fasting is opening up your whole person to the power of the Holy Spirit.**
- **Fasting will reveal to us just how much power and authority our flesh still has in our lives.**
- **Up until quite recently in church history, fasting twice a week was common practice.**⁹

OTHER LEADERS EXPLAIN

John Piper: Fasting is “whole-body hungering for God.”

Rachel Myers: “Fasting isn't about inflicting pain upon our bodies and it's not about removing sin from our lives – the latter would be repentance and should not be limited to a season. Biblical fasting is a withholding of things – good things – that have taken a too-important role in our lives. Fasting is about dependence.”

Gary Rohrmayer: “Fasting is more about longing for the power and presence of Jesus than restricting our appetites.”

Scott McKnight: Fasting is “a person's whole-body, natural response to life's sacred moments.”

Richard Foster: “Fasting reveals the things that control us ... If pride controls us, it will be revealed almost immediately ... Anger, bitterness, jealousy, strife, fear – if they are within us, they will surface during fasting.”

Dallas Willard: “This discipline teaches us a lot about ourselves very quickly. It will certainly prove humiliating to us, as it reveals to us how much our peace depends on the pleasures of eating. It may also bring to mind how we are using food pleasure to assuage [make less intense] the discomforts caused in bodies by faithless and unwise living and attitudes – lack of self-worth, meaningless work, purposeless existence, or lack of rest or exercise. If nothing else though, it will certainly demonstrate how powerful and clever our body is in getting its own way against our strongest resolves.”



9. **Comer, John Mark.** “Fasting: Part 1 – To Starve the Flesh and Feed the Spirit.” (Practicing The Way, Video, 55:43, Accessed June 15, 2021), <https://vimeo.com/251217639>.

5 Things To Pray Into

As a local church, we will be praying into three specific areas over the course of the fast. As you pray into these areas with us, please feel free to pass on anything you think would be relevant for us as a local church.

Emails can be sent to: reception@nccb.org.za

1 LEADERSHIP, WISDOM, AND BREAKTHROUGH

As a church, we are called to pray for, intercede, and give thanks for all those in leadership positions (1 Tim. 2:1-2). So please join us as we pray for the **elders of the church, the leaders in our city, and our nation's government - that we may live a peaceful and godly life.**

During the times we live in, asking God for a **hearing heart** and an **understanding mind** (1 Kings 3:9) is more critical than ever. Let us pray for godly wisdom for our leaders (and ourselves). Pray that we are not tossed back and forth by the changing narratives of the day (James 1:5-6), but that we **stand firm in the Truth, over time, against the raging currents of opposition.**

As a church, we are trusting the Lord to bring miraculous breakthroughs during this time. Key to breakthrough is that we do not normalize the state that the devil would have us live in. This is why Jesus taught us to pray, **"Your kingdom come, your will be done, on earth as it is in heaven"** (Matt. 6:10). Let us trust for a greater measure of supernatural breakthrough, whatever the circumstance!

Breakthrough often begins by us cleansing our hands and purifying our hearts. Matt Chandler notes, "Our watchfulness and seriousness about sin is not just about our actions but about our desires."¹⁰

Let us use the example in James 4:7-8 of how to submit ourselves to God.

- **Resist the devil (and he will flee!).**
- **Draw near to God.**
- **Get serious about dealing with sin.**

A good prayer to pray is Ps. 139:23-24, **"Search me, O God, and know my heart! Try me and know my thoughts! And see if there be any grievous way in me, and lead me in the way everlasting!"**



2 RELATIONSHIPS, FAMILY, AND UNITY

Essential to realising the blessings that the Lord has for us as a local church is unity! We have said much about the role of the person of the Holy Spirit as we have spoken about prayer and fasting. **The Holy Spirit's role in our lives and our community during this time is vital, and yet we need to ensure that we do not grieve Him.**

A great picture of the Holy Spirit in our lives is the imagery where the Holy Spirit descended on Jesus like a dove after His baptism. John writes (v. 1:32), "I saw the Spirit come down from heaven as a dove and **remain on him**" (emphasis added). The Holy Spirit remaining on us (like a dove) is vital. R.T. Kendall notes, "With Jesus, the Dove remained. He stayed. He never flew away. Why? It is because Jesus never grieved the Holy Spirit." Kendall continues to say, **"when the Dove lifts - although the Spirit never leaves you, the anointing diminishes."**¹¹

So how do we grieve the Holy Spirit?

Eph. 4:30 warns us that we grieve the Spirit by our relationships with one another – like when we judge each other, act angrily towards others, or harbour unforgiveness in our hearts.

OUR GOAL SHOULD ALWAYS BE TO ENJOY UNBROKEN FELLOWSHIP WITH THE HOLY

10. Chandler, Matt. "James – Bible Study Book: Faith Works." (Nashville, TN: LifeWayPress, 2018), 96

11. Kendall, R. T. "Holy Fire: A Balanced, Biblical Look at the Holy Spirit's Work in Our Lives." (CharismaHouse, Kindle, 2014), 1704.

SPIRIT AND NOT TO GRIEVE HIM IN ANY WAY. TO DO THIS, WE NEED TO FIRST ATTEND TO THE RELATIONSHIPS IN OUR LIVES.

Let us pray into the following areas:

- Repentance for any unforgiveness.
- That all broken relationships would be restored, and unity would reign.
- For our neighbours, specifically for us to love our neighbours.
- That we would even love our enemies.

The family unit is certainly under attack in recent times. Let us pray that our marriages and families would be representative of God's love. A good passage of Scripture to read and pray into for marriages and families is Eph. 5:22 - 6:4.

Some specific prayer items:

- For the strengthening of marriages.
- For teenagers and children in the church (and your own children).
- That we would submit to the leading of the Holy Spirit in our lives and that He would "remain on us."

IT'S BY LOVE FOR ONE ANOTHER THAT
CHRIST IS MOST VISIBLY SEEN IN OUR
LIVES (JOHN 13:35)

3 SALVATION, HEALING, AND WHOLENESS

The Holy Spirit is "bringing to completion the work that has been planned by God the Father and begun by God the Son."¹² And each of us, through the power of the Holy Spirit, is called to be co-labourers of this work. We are ambassadors of the Kingdom of God (2 Cor. 5:20) to our families, communities, city, nation, and nations of the world!

12. Grudem, Wayne. "Systematic Theology : An Introduction to Biblical Doctrine. 1st edition." (Leicester: Zondervan, 1994), 249.

13. Mathew, Thompson K. "Spirit-Led Ministry In The Twenty-First Century. Revised and Updated." (WestBow Press, 2017), 3.

So, what is the work that we are called to?

1 John 3:8 says, "The reason the Son of God appeared was to destroy the works of the devil." Jesus also said, "The thief comes only to steal and kill and destroy. I came that they may have life and have it abundantly" (John 10:10). **Therefore, wherever there is death, wherever there is loss, wherever there is destruction, we are called to bring life!**

Thompson Mathew explains the role believers play when he says, **"God calls His broken children to wholeness and holiness; therefore, ministry must seek to restore persons to wholeness by bringing healing to body, mind, spirit, and relationships."**¹³

Let us pray to be effective in the work that we have been called to:

- That we would see every person in the church rising up in faith and believing (resisting unbelief)!
- For the Lord to give us people from all nations as our inheritance (Ps. 8:2).
- For more salvations and to see the lost turning away from sin.
- That we would see the "greater works" that Jesus promised those who believe, occurring in us and through us (John 14:12).
- To experience a greater measure of the presence of the Holy Spirit in our lives, empowering us to be effective ministers to those in need.





6 Preparing To Fast

WHETHER YOU ARE BEGINNING A PRIVATE FAST OR FASTING CORPORATELY, THE BELOW STEPS WILL HELP YOU PREPARE YOURSELF.*

HOW TO BEGIN

We have already discussed the key ingredient to fasting is faith! Heb. 11:6 says, **“Whoever would draw near to God must believe that he exists and that he rewards those who seek him.”** So, start with faith in your heart that God is going to act.

Richard Mulholland describes a person’s spiritual formation as **“A process of being formed in the image of Christ for the sake of others.”**¹⁴ Fasting is less about me and more about being formed into the likeness of Jesus. All spiritual devotions are most effective when we actively yield to the Holy Spirit, **allowing Him to transform our areas of unlikeness to Christ into His likeness.** Take time to acknowledge any shortcomings (confess) and receive forgiveness.

Ask the Holy Spirit for guidance regarding the specific areas that you are trusting Him to work in, both from a personal and corporate perspective – make a list!

DECIDE WHAT TO FAST

The type of fasting you choose is up to you. You could go on a regular fast, which is no food and only water. You could do a liquids only fast. Or you could do a partial fast like Daniel, who abstained from meats, treats, and alcohol but did eat vegetables and fruit and drank water.

DECIDE HOW LONG TO FAST

You may fast as long as you like. Most can easily fast from one to three days, but you may feel the grace to go longer. Use wisdom and pray for guidance. Beginners are advised to start slow. Different expressions of the one-day fast can be applied. Some fast from after dinner, skipping breakfast and lunch and then breaking their fast again at dinner. Others fast a full 24 hours and only eat breakfast again on the following day. There is no formula. What is important is your heart attitude towards what you are doing.

BE WISE WHEN YOU END

Don't overeat when the time comes to end your fast. Instead, begin eating solid food gradually; eat small portions or snacks.

FAQS ON FASTING

I'M FEELING NERVOUS ABOUT FASTING. IS THIS NORMAL?

We've mentioned that it will be challenging because you're fighting against your flesh, and the devil doesn't want you to gain the victory that fasting brings in your life. But don't let that put you off. If you've never fasted before, start with a day, or even a single meal. Corporate fasts are a great way to kick-start a lifestyle of personal fasting.

WHAT IF I HAVE A MOMENT OF WEAKNESS?

God is not an insufferable taskmaster. He is our loving Father (and he has a sense of humour). If you stumble, get right back up and keep going. One of the purposes of fasting is to train us for the long wars. Don't give up, keep persevering!

WHY DON'T I FEEL GREAT WHEN I FAST?

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 will have hunger pains. Limit your activity, exercise moderately, and take time to rest. It also helps to wean yourself off caffeine and sugars as you approach a time of fasting.

HOW DO I SPEND MY TIME?

Remember, this is not a hunger strike, so try to set specific time aside to pray, read your Bible, journal what God is saying to you, or spend time listening to praise and worship music. At the very least, dedicate the time you would have spent preparing food and eating, as time to spend with God. If you ever feel stuck, try speaking out or writing out all the things God has done for you in a time of thanksgiving to Him.

I'M REALLY KEEN TO PARTICIPATE IN THE FAST BUT HAVE A MEDICAL CONDITION, WHAT SHOULD I DO?

You need to respect your body. If you have a medical condition that you are unsure of, please consult your doctor. You may be able to participate in a partial fast. Abstaining from habits like social media or TV does not constitute a fast (a fast has to do with not eating). However, these are also options if you are not able to change your diet. Abstaining from certain privileges or luxuries is also a good way of including children in a fast.

WHAT IF I DON'T GET THE BREAKTHROUGH I AM TRUSTING FOR?

If you see your fast as a love offering to the Lord, you don't need to worry about this. Matt. 6:18 says, **"Your fasting may not be seen by others but by your Father who is in secret. And your Father who sees in secret will reward you."** There will always be a reward for us earnestly seeking God; it may just not come in the form we expect. It is also important to know that while fasting can bring us victory in the spiritual realm, it doesn't mean we can fast and go on sinning. Even unforgiveness is a sin and will hinder our prayers.

MOST OF US HAVE LIFESTYLES WHERE WE THINK APPETITE AND HUNGER ARE ONE AND THE SAME, THEY ARE NOT. IT'S OK TO BE HUNGRY, USE IT AS A REMINDER TO TURN YOUR ATTENTION TO GOD.

* Adapted from JentezenFranklin's 21 Day Fast, <https://jentezenfranklin.org/fastingtips>.

14. Mulholland, M. Robert. "Invitation to a Journey: A Road Map for Spiritual Formation." (Downers Grove: Intervarsity Press, 2016), 16



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