



fasting guide
by ronda davenport

Overview

According to scripture, fasting is doing without food, or something else that brings pleasure, to humble ourselves before God and focus on Him. It is a time of willingly putting aside an earthly enjoyment to experience more of God. Prayer and fasting go hand in hand because as we free up space in our schedules, we can spend extra time with Jesus praying, meditating on His Word, resting in Him, and enjoying His presence.

Reasons For Fasting

To seek God and His protection, deliverance, and healing in times of crisis, guidance, and direction (2 Samuel 12:15-20; 2 Chronicles 20:3-4; Ezra 8:21-23; Esther 4:15-17; Psalm 35:13; Daniel 6:18-23, 10:1-3; Job 2; 12-13; Judges 20:24-28)

To repent, be humble, and mourn over sin (1 Samuel 7:5-6; 2 Samuel 1:12; 1 Kings 21:27-29; Ezra 10:6-17; Nehemiah 1:1-4; Daniel 9:3-5; Jonah 3:5)

To worship and serve the Lord (Matthew 6:16-18; Luke 2:36-37; Acts 10:30)

To be filled with God's power for service (Acts 13: 1-4; Acts 14:23)

Types of Fasting

Water Fast: water only

Juice Fast: fruit and vegetable juices only

Daniel Fast: water, fruits, and vegetables only

Digital Fast: phone, social media, Netflix, news coverage, etc.

General Fast: anything that takes away your focus, or brings you pleasure

Partial Fast: fasting for one meal, part of a day, or from sunup to sundown

Multiday Fast: we recommend a 3 Day Fast or a 7 Day Fast

Extended Fast: we recommend a 21 Day Fast or 40 Day Fast

Group Fast: prayer and fasting with a group of believers for a specific purpose

Fasting Guidelines

Reduce your normal food intake the week before your fast to prepare your body.

Drink a lot of water to stay hydrated.

Avoid caffeine, sugar, and sugar substitutes.

Limit your activity and allow yourself extra time to rest as you will have less energy.

Break your fast gradually with a small meal that is easy to digest.

Check with your doctor before attempting an extended fast from food.

*Spiritual fasting is never for the purpose of weight loss. If you have ever struggled with an eating disorder, please use caution and wisdom. Also, if you are pregnant, a nursing mother, or someone with medical conditions, you should choose a non-food fast.

Fasting Basics

Find Solitude: try to find ways to be alone with the Lord.

Meditate on Scripture: God has chosen to give us the answer for every question and the fulfillment for every need through the Bible. Read more of God's Word as you fast and allow Him to speak to you through it.

Spend Concentrated Time in Prayer: spend time with Jesus, not only talking to Him, but being still before Him and listening to what He might be trying to teach you through His Word.

Worship the Lord: praise God through song, focusing on His names and attributes, and praying the Psalms.

Take Time to Journal: record the details of your fast to remember all that God is teaching you. Fasting is a spiritual discipline that adds amazing blessing and fullness to the believer's life. No matter where you are on your fasting journey, we encourage you to take the next step of obedience. If you have never fasted before, start slowly, and build up your ability to fast. If you are experienced in the practice of fasting, consider asking God to show you how He might desire for you to go deeper. In whatever season of life you find yourself, we are praying for you that God will use fasting to grow you closer to Him.





DAY ONE

humble yourself

Whoever exalts himself shall be humbled; and whoever humbles himself shall be exalted.

-Matthew 23:12

There are many examples of humility in the Bible, but none paint a more vivid picture than that of Jesus washing His disciples' feet. Kneeling over the basin with a towel wrapped around his waist, Jesus demonstrated to us and his disciples the proper posture to take if we are to make an eternal difference in this world. Our human nature leads us to exalt our own needs and desires above those of others. We can be filled with pride believing that it is our own strengths, talents, and intelligence that are fueling our Kingdom work. Only when we understand that we can do no good thing apart from Christ are we well-positioned to see Jesus work through us. As we approach God with great humility, He chooses to entrust us with Kingdom assignments and exalt and empower us to accomplish them.

Fasting is an act of humbling ourselves before God. As we turn to Him in prayer and fasting, we are admitting our neediness and desire to be filled with something greater than physical food. As we humble ourselves this week, may God exalt us in our spirits to do the work of the church from Woodstock to the World!

Jesus, thank you for your example of humility in the way that you lived and in the way that you died for my sins on the cross. Please help me today to humble myself in your sight that you might lift me up to serve, honor, and glorify you as you deserve. In your name I pray, Amen.



DAY TWO

confess

If we say we have no sin, we are deceiving ourselves and the truth is not in us. If we confess our sins, He is faithful and righteous to forgive us our sins and to cleanse us from all unrighteousness.

-1 John 1:8-9

Yesterday, we looked at the importance of humility. There is nothing more humbling than allowing the mirror of God's Word and the convicting power of the Holy Spirit to show us our own sin. Confession is a difficult and often painful discipline. It requires us to deny our flesh and submit and surrender to the Lordship of Jesus. We are tempted to compare ourselves to others in this process, in which case, we may not see the sin hidden deep in our hearts. Only when we compare ourselves to the holiness and perfection of Jesus do we begin to see our selfishness, wrong thoughts and attitudes, and impure motives clearly. Even when we do recognize sins that need to be confessed, we are often hesitant to admit our wrongdoing. All the while, our merciful God is faithful and righteous to forgive us of our sins and to cleanse us from all unrighteousness. Oh, the glorious freedom that lies within that promise!

As we experience God through prayer and fasting today, let us ask Him to show us every sin that we need to confess to Him. May we never deceive ourselves, but be filled with His truth and covered with His cleansing forgiveness.

Father, apart from the righteousness imparted to me through Christ, I am a filthy rag. Help me to see my sin just as you see it and willingly confess it with a humble heart. You are Holy, Holy, Holy and my only standard of righteousness. Thank you for your willingness and ability to forgive me and cleanse me. In Jesus' name I pray, Amen.

DAY THREE

repent

Remember then how far you have fallen; repent, and do the works you did at first. Otherwise, I will come to you and remove your lampstand from its place, unless you repent.

-Revelation 2:5

As a Christian, you were likely led to Christ by someone who told you that you need to repent of your sins – to turn away from them with the intent of never sinning again. While this does not mean that we will not fall away again, it does mean that our hearts' desire is to align our actions, thoughts, and words with all that God has designed for us.

Because our repentance is not permanent while we live in this fallen world, we must continue to repent. Yesterday, we studied confession. Confession is an important step in remembering and acknowledging our sins. It frees us to accept God's grace, but we cannot stop there. We must repent – turn away from those sins – and return to God to do the works that we did as new Christians, freshly on fire for God.

A part of our fasting this week is to learn greater purity before God. We can use the focus that fasting brings to deeply examine our hearts and make sure that we have turned away from the sin that can hinder our communion with God.

Lord, please bring to mind all that I have done that is against your will and your instruction. Create in me a clean heart and give me a desire to seek first your kingdom. Give me the strength to turn away from my sins and the temptation that may cause me to stray from you.

DAY FOUR

forgive

So, as those who have been chosen of God, holy and beloved, put on a heart of compassion, kindness, humility, gentleness, and patience; bearing with one another, and forgiving each other, whoever has a complaint against anyone, just at the Lord forgave you, so also should you.

-Colossian 3:13

Part of our goal for this week is to remove all barriers to intimacy with God. Fasting affords us a mechanism to focus all our energy on Him. However, that focus is broken when we are holding something against someone else. There is no way that we can receive all that God has for us if a corner of our mind is saved for storing a grudge, no matter how small.

In this passage of Colossians, Paul is in the middle of an exhortation to Christians at Colossae to lead a holy life. He is pleading with them to not focus on earthly things but the things of God. An important part of our Christian life is how we walk with our fellow humans. Given that we are all sinners, we will all do things to others that are not Christ-like. Therefore, the corollary will likely be true: there is always going to be someone who has done something to upset us. Our charge from the Word of God is to be in a mode of active forgiveness. The word for “forgiving” is a present tense, middle voice participle. It means that we are responsible for the action, and the action is happening immediately, continuously, and permanently. Otherwise, our resentment will build and become a barrier to our relationship with God. Practice complete and permanent forgiveness, just like the forgiveness that we receive through Jesus.

Lord, create in me a self-awareness so that I can recognize my need to forgive and give me the strength and grace that I need to be able to follow through on my need to forgive others. Thank you for your grace to me. Help me to extend that to all of those I interact with.

DAY FIVE

read the bible

This book of law shall not depart from your mouth, but you shall meditate on it day and night, so that you may be careful to do according to all that is written in it, for then you will make your way prosperous, and then you will have success.

-Joshua 1:8

This verse is the charge by God to Joshua as he is taking over leadership of the Israelites from Moses. God is very specific about the importance of knowing His word. In the statement before this, he instructs Joshua to follow the law, but interestingly, AFTER that, he tells Joshua to know and use the law. This is because, as the leader of God's chosen people, Joshua is going to need the law as the wisdom of God.

Though most of us are not going out to lead God's people in a conquest of the Promised Land, we are going out to fulfill the purpose that He has appointed for our lives. Whether that is school, work, parenting, caring for family members, teaching, or serving in some other way, we all have a purpose and God has a plan both for our lives and how we live it. For us to make every moment count in our short lives (in comparison to eternity), we need to bring the wisdom and word of God to bear in every situation. Knowing the Bible helps us to understand that God's plan is bigger than us, our success, or our comfort. It can guide and direct us through difficulty and help us stay humble in our successes, knowing that any victory we have comes from above.

God, give me a great desire to know you better through your Word. Help me to consistently and passionately read, understand, and memorize the Bible so that it can truly be a lamp for my feet and a light to my path.



DAY SIX

pray

Rejoice always; pray without ceasing; in everything give thanks; for this is God's will for you in Christ Jesus.

-1 *Thessalonians 5:17*

Just as reading the Bible is a daily discipline that is an absolute necessity in the life of a believer, praying is the very lifeline between us and our Lord. In the same way that we must breathe without ceasing to survive and thrive, unceasing prayer fills us with the spiritual vitality required to live for Christ. Praying without ceasing looks different throughout the day. In the morning, it could be a dedicated time of praying through God's Word as we seek His will for our day. On the way to work or school, we might sing praises to Jesus in our cars. As we pass lost friends and coworkers in the halls, we whisper a silent prayer from our hearts that the Holy Spirit will convict and save. When we look out the window and see the reflection of our Creator in nature, we can lift a praise for His splendor and majesty. Everything that we see can lead us to pray as we recognize the presence of God and realize that He is right next to us in every moment. It is this constant presence of the Lord that allows us to rejoice and give thanks in good times and in bad. As we sense the nearness of God, the natural response is prayer.

As we fast and pray today, may God open our eyes to the unceasing opportunities we have to commune with Him, and may our daily dialogue with Him become as natural as breathing.

God, thank you for walking by my side through each part of my day. Help me to sense your presence and include you in all my thoughts. Give me the desire to spend time with you in the morning and in the evening. Teach me to talk to you all throughout the day. Holy Spirit, help me to notice all that is going on around me and turn everything back to you in prayer. Allow me to rejoice always, pray without ceasing, and give thanks in all things according to your will for me in Christ Jesus. Amen.

DAY SEVEN

share jesus

Jesus said to them, "Go into the world and preach the gospel to all creation."

-Mark 16:15

After we are saved, what is the purpose for us remaining on earth? We have already settled our final destination – we get to spend eternity praising God. Why should we have to remain in this fallen world with all of its suffering? The answer is very simple: God is giving us the privilege of joining in the work that He is doing. We get to take part in helping to build the eternal kingdom by introducing others to the joy that we have in Christ.

The challenge to you is to not only know that you need to share the gospel, but to become specifically intentional about doing so. As you wake up every morning and get alone with God, ask Him to provide divine appointments with people with whom you can share. Boldly ask how you can pray for people you meet. Count it all joy when everything doesn't go well in your daily life. Shine the love of Jesus wherever you go. Share openly your love for Jesus. Coming alongside the Holy Spirit in the work of God will bring you closer every time you share.

As you fast today, write down the names that come to mind with whom you need to share. As an additional challenge, write down the names of those you intend to share with AND the names of those with whom you share the gospel.

Lord, thank you for allowing me to work with you to change the world. I ask that you order my steps and place me in situations where I can share your love and the joy that you can bring to someone's life. Your goodness is amazing. I pray that you prepare my fields and give me the boldness to continually work with you in the harvest of souls.

Woodstock