

# The importance of

# Fasting

Fasting is a KEY part of a Christian's way of life. Many Christians do it but few appreciate the immense results that can be achieved by this practice. Some Christians do not take it seriously at all while others do it once and feel "they have done their share".

This is not how things should be done. Fasting has 3 important factors to consider:

1. Fasting must be done with a set **PURPOSE** in other words don't do it simply as a tradition or because of boredom.
2. Fasting must produce **REAL RESULTS** that are observable. There is no point fasting if you are not getting any results.
3. Fasting does not make you right with God. Only Jesus and His sacrifice can wash away our sins - if you believe fasting will secure your place in heaven then the fasting is a **DEAD WORK** in the eyes of God.

There is so much more wonderful and exciting things we can discuss about fasting. Don't feel overwhelmed and think it is too complicated for you. Fasting is designed to be for everyone. The Bible never speaks about "if" you fast, but rather the Bible speaks about "**when**" you fast (See Matthew 6: 16 - 18 & Matthew 9:15)! Every spiritually-born child of God is expected to fast. The following few pages will be a quick, enlightening guide to help you on your road to understand and better apply the practice of fasting.



**The Prayer Network**

## DEFINITIONS

### **FASTING (verb)**

Abstain from all or some kinds of food or drink, esp. as a religious observance

### **INTERCESSION (noun)**

The action of saying a prayer on behalf of another person. A form of prayer of petition on behalf of others (intercessors). The prayer of intercession leads us to pray as Christ Jesus did, he is the first and greatest intercessor.

Other examples:

Abraham prayed for & interceded on behalf of Sodom and Gomorrah.

Moses interceded for the people of Israel.

Paul made mention of people in his prayers. He interceded for the different Churches.

Jesus prayed for those who would be saved, for His disciples and for true unity.

# When do we FAST?

*“Announce a time of fasting; call the people together for a solemn meeting. Bring the leaders and all the people of the land into the Temple of the Lord your God, and cry out to him there. The day of the Lord is near, the day when destruction comes from the Almighty. How terrible that day will be!”*

**Joel 1:14 - 15 NLT**

- A: God's Holy Spirit must give us guidance - He will tell us when it is the best time. (See Luke 4: 1 - 2)
- B: A calling on the Church of Jesus Christ (as a whole) to fast and pray for important, life-affecting matters (Joel 1: 14 - 15 and Joel 2:15 - 16)
- C: As an individual you when you need to fast (See Matthew 6: 16 - 18)

# Why do we FAST?

# (PURPOSE)

*Let them pray: “Spare your people, LORD!”*

**Joel 2: 17b NLT**

Many people have their own reasons for fasting. Isaiah 58: 1 - 6 gives us some wrong motives for people to fast (it makes them look like a goody-goody). It sends the wrong message out to people in the world and serves no PURPOSE in God's eye's:

- A: Fasting with a right motive will see a number of great things take place (See Isaiah 58: 6 - 7). Fasting will result in promised blessings to be fulfilled (See Isaiah 58: 8 - 14) but fasting is also used to...
- C: Put off God's judgment (See Jonah 3: 5 & Jonah 3:19)
- D: Fasting brings revelation and divine vision
  - E.g. - In Daniel's life (See Daniel 9:2 - 3; Daniel 9: 22 - 23 & Daniel 10:1 - 3)
  - In Paul's life (See Acts 27:21 - 24; 2 Corinthians 11:27 - the following chapter in 2 Corinthians 12 you will read of the results of Paul's fast - he received visions and revelations)
  - In Peter's life (See Acts 10:10)
- E: Fasting will humble the soul (See Psalm 69:10)
- F: Fasting sets captives free (See Isaiah 58:6)
- G: Fasting gives VICTORY over temptation (See Matthew 4:2).
- H: Fasting assists in preparation for evangelism.

It is said that TRUE FASTING is intensified INTERCESSION (PRAYER)

**-- PRAYER is essential for FASTING & FASTING is essential for PRAYER --**

## Who FASTS?

# (REAL RESULTS)

*"I have come here to give you insight and understanding. The moment you began praying, a command was given. And now I am here to tell you what it was, for you are very precious to God."*

**Daniel 9: 22 - 23 NLT**

Is fasting really important? Are there other's who have done it before? What REAL RESULTS can I expect if I fast? Fasting is a very relevant practice for today! Fasting was and still is an important part the Christian experience. Here are a few examples where men (and women) have fasted to find guidance and help from God. These examples will testify to the relevance of fasting Christians in the modern world. You can expect REAL RESULTS by taking up a fast under God's leading:

- A: Demon Spirits were cast out only by prayer and fasting (See Matthew 17: 14—21)
- B: The Lord revealed His will to people through the Holy Spirit (See Acts 13: 1– 4)
- C: Spiritual leadership was recognized (See Acts 14:23)
- D: The City of Nineveh was saved from divine judgment and wrath (See Jonah 2 and Jonah 3)
- E: God delivered His people from genocide (See Esther 4)

## What FAST to do?

*"Turn to me now, while there is time. Give me your hearts. Come with fasting, weeping, and mourning. Don't tear your clothing in your grief, but tear your hearts instead. Return to the Lord your God, for he is merciful and compassionate, slow to get angry and filled with unfailing love. He is eager to relent and not punish."*

**Joel 2: 12 - 13**

There are 3 kinds of fast generally observed in the Bible - this serves as a guide for us even today. The Holy Spirit also plays a key role in helping us to decide how we need to fast. The three kinds of fasting practices are:

- A: COMPLETE FAST - Where no food or liquids are ingested at all. Paul the Apostle undertook this fast at his conversion, for 3 days only. We recommend waiting on God, speaking to your local church leadership and/or speaking to a medical practitioner before undertaking this kind of fast. (See Acts 9:9)
- B: LIMITED FAST - Where no rich food is eaten (meat or wine / juice). Daniel would drink water followed together with a basic vegetable diet. Daniel fasted like this for 3 weeks. Others will eat dry bread only.
- C: STANDARD FAST - Where only water is ingested, no food or any other liquids are ingested. Elijah and Moses both did this fast. Jesus in the extreme (See Mat-

thew 4:2) did this fast for 40 days - this however is not recommended unless you have really done your homework in the matter. Please be aware of the dangers of a 40-day fast.

Fasting has it's challenges and we recommend choosing a fast that accommodates the following factors:

1. The seriousness of your circumstances - difficult problems may require an intense fast.
2. Health concerns - if you are on medication be wise, A COMPLETE or STANDARD fast will not be ideal for you. A LIMITED fast would be more appropriate for you. Speak to your doctor.
3. A note for students doing examinations - We serve a God of miracles, but use wisdom before setting out to do a COMPLETE or STANDARD fast before or during exam periods.
4. Working citizens - if your career requires a lot of physical and mental labour or if your work is hazardous - please consider the safety aspects of your job. Do not risk other peoples lives - rather do a LIMITED fast!

## HOW to FAST?

# (SOME TIPS)

### STARTING YOUR FIRST FAST

- Don't try and copy others - be yourself and fast with PURPOSE. Don't over do your first fast. Fast for a day or two.
- The best fast to start with is the LIMITED FAST (See previous section).
- Fast and pray - the prayer will supernaturally keep you and sustain you!
- Drink plenty of water - keep hydrated. (note: Stop tea and coffee consumption a few days before the fast - it helps with the annoying head aches).
- Breaking a fast (bringing the fast to an end) will not be a problem for your body if the fast lasted only for a day or two.

### BREAKING A LONGER FAST - IMPORTANT RULES

- Start eating small amounts of food again.
- Eat slowly and chew well!
- If you feel uncomfortable - stop eating. Return to your meal if you feel comfortable again.
- Do not over-do things - if you eat too much too quickly after a long fast - you will without a doubt get very sick!
- Return and break your fast by the power of God's Holy Spirit (See Luke 4:14)

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**For further information on the topic of Fasting please contact us**

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**Or visit [www.pray.za.org](http://www.pray.za.org)**

This short study on fasting is not intended as an authoritative source. Rather it is a simple guide to inspire further interest into the subject of Christian Fasting.