

PRAYER AND FASTING

Fasting is...

giving up food or something specific for a spiritual purpose

Prayer is...

listening & talking with God; asking for God's action.

Reasons for Fasting

God desires **relationship** with us. Oftentimes, our desires, wants, and even our calendars are out-of-sync with God's will for our lives. If left unattended, these "fleshly" desires and demands can actually control of our lives. Disciples whose lives are in submission to our Savior are in the process of our minds, heart, bodies and emotions being transformed into the image of Christ, in whom we have put our faith and trust.

This **transformation** is not easy.

In taking time and space to fast and pray, we are silencing the voices of our calendars and quieting the demands of our bodies. This intentional act of withholding reminds ourselves of God's Lordship in our lives as well as invites God to do His Work in our lives.

God is the object of our **motivation**.

Fasting works! Prayer and fasting seem to work in synergy. Once when the disciples failed to exorcise demons, Jesus explained that in such instances prayer and fasting were required. While fasting can sometimes seem to move God to action, other times we discover God speaks insights into situations so we can *more effectively* pray for a particular situation or person.

Of course, this does not mean that we manipulate God by fasting, but there are times when God desires us to underline our requests with fasting.

Types of Fasts

There are several kinds of fasts, and there is no formula for determining which kind of fast, or duration is most appropriate for you. The following are three Biblical examples of fasting:

Absolute Fast

Taking in nothing including water. This is extreme and should NOT be attempted without first consulting with your doctor.

Normal Fast

Withholding food, but not liquids like water and juices to maintain strength and electrolytes. Or giving up one meal on a specific day for a specific request.

Partial Fast

In the Bible, Daniel and his companions ate vegetables and drank water instead of the King's meat and sweets. This type of fast may be more appropriate if you have certain health issues or have a physically demanding job. For some people, giving up chocolate or coffee may be a real reminder to pray.

During a Fast

You can also fast things that have meaning to you: Media, Sports, Shopping, etc.

During a fast, you will discover "extra time." In giving up food and/or entertainment, you'll have more time. Use this time, to engage in a practice of prayer:

- Reading God's Word (The Bible)
- Praying (contemplative listening)
- Focusing on God (reflection)
- Worshiping
- and ALWAYS serving/helping others (this is not a time of selfishness)

Motives

A particular danger in fasting is that our God-centered motives can be tainted by our motives to draw attention to our self and impress others. Jesus cautions us to as much as possible to let our fast be between us and God. God sees our heart and is never fooled, check your motives frequently to keep self-righteousness at bay.

History of Fasting

The practices of praying and fasting can be found in both the Old and New Testaments. Before Jesus, our model, began his public ministry he fasted for 40 days in preparation. The scriptures listed in this brochure cite other instances of fasting found in the Bible.

Scriptures Related to Fasting

- Matthew 4:1-4
- Matthew 6:17-18
- Matthew 17:14-20
- Joel 1:14
- Joel 2:12
- Exodus 34:28
- Acts 13:2-3
- Acts 14:23
- Isaiah 58
- Psalm 51
- Psalm 139
- 2 Chronicles 7:14
- Jeremiah 29:10-14
- Matthew 5-7
- Luke 10:38-42
- Ecclesiastes 12:13-14
- Galatians 5:16-26

"How good and pleasant it is when God's people live together in unity! It is like precious oil poured on the head, running down on the beard, running down on Aaron's beard, down on the collar of his robe." Psalm 133

Fasting & North Fresno Church

North Fresno Church has made fasting an important part of the rhythm of church life as we recognize our need to partner with God in our personal discipleship and in our challenge to love God, love our neighbors and love our world.

Fasting for in January has become an important part of beginning our year with an intentional focus of quieting our minds, settling our hearts and putting our focus on God.

We encourage you to consider how you (and your family) can participate during this season. Don't choose to just give up broccoli, but instead, commit to a real sacrifice which will grow your awareness of our weakness and dependence on God.

Prayer

Communication is a vital component in every relationship. Our texting and social media craze are illustrations of the importance and power of communication.

God wants to be on an open line with us every moment of every day. We can communicate a need, thanks, praise, and emotion, as well as receive warning, affirmation, and wisdom at any moment.

Prayer is how we partner with God, praying God's heart into situations as we pray for God to mobilize resources into action.

Let's use January to set our hearts into a rhythm of prayer and alignment with God.

Nightly Prayer Services

During each 21 nights of the fast, you're invited to join various churches from across denomination as they host prayer services. To love our neighbor best in the midst of the pandemic churches will be hosting these services online. Look at our City Prayer Night link for where to find evening services.



Loving God. Loving Neighbors.

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Join North Fresno Church
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San Joaquin Valley.