

3 DAYS OF PRAYER + FASTING

We're very excited about spending some time together in prayer and fasting. Who knows what the Lord will do! This guide gives some information about what fasting *is* and *isn't* along with other details.

WHAT IS FASTING?

Jesus said to his followers "*when* you fast" not "*if* you fast" (Matthew 6:16)! And so, followers of Jesus have fasted since Bible times. It is simply the act of giving something up, usually food, for a certain period of time to devote yourself to God in prayer.

As you probably know, it isn't just Christians who fast. In fact there are a wide variety of reasons that people fast: for health reasons; for a diet; for religious reasons; to prove something to themselves; to overcome addictions.

However, the Christian view of fasting is different from all of these. It is not about trying to achieve something or show how righteous you are, but rather simply to remove distractions from spending time with your Father in heaven. Whilst fasting is a personal thing, we would urge you to join in with as many of the planned prayer events as possible, alongside fasting.

WHAT FASTING ISN'T!

It's important to remember some things about fasting:

IT'S NOT MAGIC - fasting isn't some trick that if you get it right, miracles are guaranteed! This kind of idea gives the impression that God only gives gifts when you really twist his arm, by showing just how much you want it! That's not a gracious, loving Father who delights in giving good gifts to his children.



SOME DIFFERENT TYPES OF FASTING

WATER-ONLY FASTING - this is perhaps the most common form of fasting, and is what was often practiced in the Bible. It is not eating or drinking anything except water, for a particular period of time. We wouldn't necessarily do this for more than 24-hours unless you have done so before. However, if you're fasting for several days, you may find doing this helpful for just one day and then using another form of fasting during the others.

LIQUID-ONLY FASTING - this is similar to the 'Water-only' fast above, but you can have other drinks as well as water. For example, some people know that if they completely stopped caffeine it would be very problematic for them, and so doing this enables them to have a more successful fast.

PARTIAL FASTING - this is where you miss something but not for the entire 24-hr period. For example, you might miss breakfast and lunch, but have dinner, or perhaps just miss one meal a day. Again, the purpose of fasting is to spend time with God, and so this kind of fasting enables you to be flexible in how you do that.

DANIEL FAST - this is where there are particular components of your diet that you miss (eg. Meat, Alcohol, rich foods etc) or perhaps you only have vegetables and water. It is based on an interpretation about the way that Daniel fasted in the Bible. Some people might find this helpful to mix and combine with some of the other methods of fasting across several days.

ACTIVITY FAST - instead of fasting from food or drink, this type of fasting is from a particular activity instead. For example, some people choose to fast from one of the following: Social media; TV; Alcohol; Sex; Video games; Netflix; Shopping.

WHAT MIGHT THESE DAYS LOOK LIKE?

There is no set pattern to this, and it's good to prayerfully think about which of the above options might work best for you. For the average adult it could be that it is possible to spend one 24-hour period doing a 'Water-only' fast or 'Liquid-only' fast, mixed with a partial fast and an activity fast if fasting for more than one day. The key thing is to think about what is possible for you.

IT'S NOT A GUARANTEE - fasting isn't a sure fire way to get what you want! This kind of idea gives the impression that God is a divine Coke machine. Just do the right things, in the right way to get things delivered just the way you want it! God is much holier and more gracious than that, and delights in blessing his children. This sets us free from having to rely on our own ability to get things right.

IT'S NOT FOR THE SUPER SPIRITUAL - fasting isn't for the 'A-list' Christians who seems to live on a different level! No, fasting is for ordinary followers of a Jesus with our ordinary lives.

IT'S NOT EASY - fasting isn't straightforward and does require some forethought. As you'll see, it's worth thinking about what kind of fasting works for you. When you fast, it won't be easy, but hopefully you'll begin to discover the real joy in it, as you push on through.

IT'S NOT UNIFORM - as you'll see there are lots ways to fast. Because there is real freedom in following Christ, we would encourage you to fast in a way that is right for you, with your circumstances. It is important to be honest about what works for you in your situation, rather than simply copying what you think you should do.

IT'S NOT IMPOSSIBLE - finally, it's important to remember that fasting is possible! Whether or not you have done it before, you can fast in some way. And so, we would encourage you to give one of the above options a try.

FASTING IN A HEALTHY WAY

Fasting often involves missing some sort of food or drink in some way. However, it is really important to say that for health and other reasons, there are some people who shouldn't fast from food or drink. This might be true for pregnant or nursing women, those with emotional or mental health issues, children and a variety of others who know that missing any food or drink isn't wise. If you have health concerns, it may be wise to ask your GP beforehand for advice.

It's also important to mention that there is nothing more inherently spiritual about one particular way of fasting than another. Rather, the heart behind it is the crucial ingredient. Fasting is simply about removing distractions so that you can spend time in prayer with your loving heavenly Father.

REMEMBER THE KEY THINGS!

As you consider what this time of prayer and fasting look like for you, please remember the following:

- Fasting is to connect with God & disconnect from other things
- Your heart is more important than the specifics
- Your goal is to spend time with God in an undistracted way - what would help you with this?
- God welcomes you because of Christ, not because of a particular technique in praying or fasting. As such, rest in his grace and simply enjoy spending time with him!