

## A Simple Guide to Understand and Practice Fasting

*"Oh, taste and see that the Lord is good! Blessed is the man who takes refuge in him!"*

*Psalms 34:8*

As we take time to pray, we would also like to encourage you to consider taking time to fast. Many of us have either rarely or never participated in a fast and thus have various questions about what fasting involves and why it is important. While Jesus never commanded us to fast, he clearly expected his followers to fast (*Matthew 6:16; 9:15*). Fasting was also a vital part of the early church (*Acts 13:2-3*).

The fundamental purpose of fasting is to seek God. Jesus warned against improper motives for fasting (*Matt. 6:16-18*) and we would do well to remember that success in prayer, being filled with spiritual insight or power, or even physical benefits are not the main reason(s) that we fast. ***We fast because we want God. Fasting is a central expression of our hunger for God.*** Fasting is an intentional decision to abstain from the nourishment of this world in order to feast on the nourishment of God alone (*Matt. 4:4*). When we fast, we truly feast on God's Word and God's presence in a way that reminds us of His sufficiency and satisfaction.

Fasting also reveals to us the desires that control us. We have a tendency to cover up what is in our hearts with food and other good things, but when we fast these things come to the surface. God uncovers our pride, He exposes our self-sufficiency, and He reveals many areas of our life where we have compromised in our relationship with Him. He also brings to light our dependence on His presence and His power to accomplish His purposes in our lives (*John 4:31-34*).

**So how do you fast?** It's not necessary to jump immediately into a 30-day journey with no food; instead, begin slow! You might start with a meal or two and progress to a day or more from there in the future. Drink plenty of water and fresh fruit juices. If you have a medical condition that prevents you from fasting completely from food, consider eating much smaller portions of food than usual for a certain time and/or eating only a few simple foods (see *Daniel 1:12*).

As you fast, you will feel hunger pangs or discomfort at various points, but let this simply focus you on the inner attitude of your heart. If you are able, devote the time that you would normally eat or snack to prayer, meditation, or Bible study. You can use the prayer guide we provided as a tool to let your heart meditate on the Scriptures and follow your meditating on God's Word with prayer. In addition you could also focus on specific people or needs that God has placed on your heart and use that time to intercede for those people or needs.

In one sense, fasting is intended to be a personal and private observance hidden from others (*Matt. 6:16-18*). At the same time, evidence of God's work in and through His people throughout history show that God's people have many times come together for a corporate and more public fast (*2 Chronicles 20; Esther 4; Joel 2; Acts 13*). Fasting together as followers of Christ is a way to express not only personally but corporately that we are dependent on God and hungry for more of Him.

May God use our time of prayer and fasting to open up the gates of Heaven and pour out His Spirit on His church so that we might prepare our hearts for drawing closer to Him and glimpse His great glory in our families, church families, community, country, and among the nations!

### **A Simple Way to Remember FASTing:**

Focus on God.

Abstain from food.

Substitute the time with meditation, prayer and study.

Taste and see that the Lord is good. (*Psalms 34:8*)