

PRAYER AND FASTING 2021

Fasting is abstaining from anything that hinders prayer.
—Andrew Bonar

The abstinence is not to be an end in itself but rather for the purpose of being separated to the Lord and to concentrate on godliness. This kind of fasting reduces the influence of our self-will and invites the Holy Spirit to do a more intense work in us.

-- William Thrasher

Prayer is reaching out after the unseen; fasting is letting go of all that is seen and temporal. Fasting helps express, deepen, confirm the resolution that we are ready to sacrifice anything, even ourselves to attain what we seek for the kingdom of God.

-- Andrew Murray

As we approach 2021, we are asking our church family to join us for a much needed season of **corporate prayer and fasting January 4 through January 24**. The church will be open daily for prayer from 9:00 a.m. to 4:00 p.m. every Monday-Thursday. Please, feel free to come in the sanctuary at any time during those hours.

Fasting is an essential principle that God intended for every believer to practice. It is not a punishment; it is a privilege! Jesus said “when you fast” not “if you fast” (Matt. 6:16). The goal of fasting is to POSITION your heart and mind to HEAR from God. I have heard it said that **FASTING** disconnects us from the world and **PRAYER** connects us to God (Matt. 17:21).

Take a moment and ponder this powerful perspective on fasting by **Jenetzen Franklin**:
“While fasting is a private discipline that yields many personal benefits, the promises of fasting can also impact our community and our nation. In the Bible, there are two cases in particular where fasting literally changed history!

In the book of Esther, the Jews were on the verge of destruction because of the evil conspiracy of Haman, one of the king’s advisors. Haman was “filled” with wrath against a Jew named Mordecai because he did not “bow or pay him homage” (Esther 3:5). “Haman sought to destroy all the Jews who were throughout the whole kingdom of Ahasuerus—the people of Mordecai” (Esther 3:6).

Mordecai sought help from Queen Esther, who was his niece. Mordecai’s request meant Esther would have to literally risk her life for it was very dangerous for her to approach the king without being summoned first. So, Esther called a fast.

“Go, gather all the Jews who are present in Shushan, and fast for me; neither eat nor drink for three days, night or day. My maids and I will fast likewise. And so I will go to the king, which is against the law, and if I perish, I perish!” (Esther 4:16).

Those 72 hours of fasting changed the history of the world. When Esther approached the king on behalf of her people, they became a nation not of defeat, annihilation, suffering and shame, but a nation of favor. They received honor and promotion . . . **all because of three days of fasting and prayer.**

In the book of Joel, God promises a latter day outpouring of His Spirit. *“And it shall come to pass afterward That I will pour out My Spirit on all flesh; Your sons and your daughters shall prophesy, Your old men shall dream dreams, Your young*

men shall see visions. And also on My menservants and on My maidservants I will pour out My Spirit in those days” (Joel 2:28-29).

But this great end time outpouring can only come through prayer and fasting. **Joel 1:14** says, “Consecrate a fast, Call a sacred assembly; Gather the elders and all the inhabitants of the land into the house of the LORD your God, And cry out to the LORD.” Will you join God’s people in crying out for His Spirit? Just like the people of Nineveh and with Esther’s people—**our fasting and prayers can change history!**”

You and I can help change the history of our own nation through prayer and fasting. Not only does our nation need a revival of truth, we need healing for many suffering from sickness and disease. We need restoration for homes and businesses that have suffered greatly through this pandemic. May God open our hearts and minds to walk in righteousness and steadfastness as we seek His face.

A spiritual fast is ALWAYS accompanied by increased *prayer, meditation, reading/study of the Word of God and worship.*

Examples of Fasting and Prayer and the Purpose God Had in It

•**Ezra** the priest fasted for God's protection while carrying valuable things for God's temple. We too can fast for God's protection. (Ezra 8:21-23)

•**Daniel** the prophet fasted for the fulfilment of God's promises, and received mighty revelations from God. (Daniel 10:3)

•**Jesus, Himself fasted while on this earth, as did his followers and fasting is still a powerful key to Kingdom living.**

Jesus fasted and spoke the Word of God to overcome Satan. (See Matthew 4:1-10; Luke 4:1-13)

Jesus fasted to begin his public ministry, and have the power of God and the anointing. (Luke 4:14)

Jesus says to us in Matthew 6:16, "**When you fast...**" **not "If you fast."** A true disciple of the Lord will fast at times.

•**Elijah** needed to fast 40 days before he heard God's voice again. (1 Kings 19:8)

•**Moses** fasted to receive the Ten Commandments and the Law of God, and to see God's glory and goodness.

•**The elders**, prophets and teachers in Antioch fasted and ministered to God, which resulted in the launching of Paul and Barnabas' apostolic ministry to the Gentiles (Acts 13:2,3). Likewise we should fast and pray before getting involved in full time ministry and mission work.

Relation to Prayer and Reading of the Word:

1 Samuel 1:6-8, 17-18, Nehemiah 1:4, Daniel 9:3, 20, Joel 2:12, Luke 2:37, Acts 10:30, Acts 13:2

Corporate Fasting:

1 Samuel 7:5-6, Ezra 8:21-23, Nehemiah 9:1-3, Joel 2:15-16, Jonah 3:5-10, Acts 27:33-37

God made it clear through the prophet Joel that the last days outpouring of the Spirit will be in proportion to our fasting and crying out to God in humility, hunger and repentance. (Joel 1:5; Joel 2:12)

To help you in your fast we are including some tips for food, reading and rest. Please keep your eyes on the purpose and the prize of the fast. Our ultimate goal is to become more Christ

centered in our everyday life and to begin 2021 with prayer, Bible reading and spiritual concentration that will set the focus for the year. We believe God has powerful healings, blessings and revelations for the year to come, waiting to be revealed and released in our lives.

Suggested Daily Prayer Times:

Early morning (between 5:00 -9:00 a.m.) Take at least 30 min.

During your lunch hour (11:00-2:00 p.m.) Take at least 30 min.

During the evening – Take at least 30 min.

What to Read:

***Bible** (yearly plans at welcome center or go online for reading guides www.oneyearbible.com)

***The Power of Prayer and Fasting** by Ronnie Floyd

***The Pursuit of God** by A.W. Tozer

***The Fasting Edge** by Jentezen Franklin (available for download)

* <http://www.jentezenfranklin.org/fasting/> (website for encouragement in your fast)

***Fasting & Prayer** by Sharon & Billy Joe Daugherty (available for download)

*Anything on Prayer by Andrew Murray

(Many good books on prayer, worship, healing and hope)

Types of Fast:

There are several **types of fasting**. **The one you choose is between you and God. He will honor your best sacrifice.** –Jentezen Franklin

Full Fast - Drink only liquids (you establish the number of days).

The Daniel Fast - Eat no meat, no sweets and no bread. Drink water and juice. Eat fruits and vegetables.

3-Day Fast - This fast can be a Full Fast, Daniel Fast or give up at least one item of food.

Partial Fast - A partial fast is from 6:00 am to 3:00 pm or from sun up to sundown. You can select from three types of fasting —a Full Fast, Daniel Fast or give up at least one item of food.

Social Media/TV/Secular Radio/Computer Games -It is hard to realize how time consuming these particular activities are until we try to lay them aside. Give prayerful consideration to taking some time away for prayer and fasting to hear what God is speaking for your life in 2021.

Suggestions for the corporate fast:

We encourage you to fast something and make sure to spend time **daily** in prayer and reading the Word.

Week 1 –Daniel Fast (Some may want to continue this fast for the full 21 days. It is a transforming fast in many ways.)

Week 2 –Partial Fast (Sun up to Sun down or eat one meal a day)

Week 3 –Social Media/and a meal a day (for example social media: Facebook/TV/secular music/computer games)

Again, this is a suggestion. Many times God will lay something specific on your heart such as caffeine, sweets, breads. **Our prayer is that you will participate and make this time a priority to gaze at God and see what He is speaking over our church corporately and over us individually.**

The Modified Daniel Fast
Daniel 1:5-17

Foods to INCLUDE in your Daniel Fast:

All Fruits: Fresh, frozen, dried, juiced or canned.

All Vegetables: Fresh, frozen, dried, juiced or canned.

All whole grains: including but not limited to whole wheat, brown rice, millet, quinoa, oats, barley, grits, whole wheat pasta, whole wheat tortillas, rice cakes and popcorn.

All nuts and seeds: including but not limited to sunflower seeds, cashews, peanuts, sesame and peanut butter.

All legumes: canned or dried. Pinto, French, black-eyed, kidney, black, cannellini and white beans.

All quality oils including but not limited to olive, canola, grape seed, peanut and sesame.

Beverages: Water, 100% vegetable and fruit juices.

Other: tofu, soy products, vinegar, seasonings, salt, herbs and spices.

(Things to **avoid** are sodas, caffeine, processed sugars, dairy products and meats)

Remember to drink lots of water, get plenty of rest, keep a prayer journal, Pray in the Spirit often and meditate on the Word of God. Also limit television, computer and internet to give yourself to prayer.

**** Fast as you can, not as you can't. Not everyone is capable of omitting all foods, even for a few hours. In fact fasting is not recommended for pregnant woman, nursing mothers, young children or the elderly. For a balanced approach, try restricting certain foods and eat more simply—possibly limiting your meals to two instead of three per day. We urge those of you who are diabetic, or who have special diets to use wisdom.**

****If this is your first time to fast, it may be difficult to participate in the full fast but we suggest that you take some time during these days to either abstain from certain foods or meals.**

Remember that it is the attitude of a heart sincerely seeking Him to which God responds with a blessing (Isaiah 58, Jeremiah 14:12, 1 Corinthians 8:8). May God greatly bless you as you fast!

Blessings, Pastors Ivan and Cindy